Youth work and spirituality in a time of change
an interpretative phenomenological analysis

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Award date:
2021

Awarding institution:
Coventry University

Youth Work and Spirituality in a time of Change: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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December 2019

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy)

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Abstract

This 18-month longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) research study explored how youth workers' experiences of spirituality impacted their practice. Nine youth workers in secular contexts in the UK were interviewed three times to capture the work-related transitions they were undergoing. Each interview had a specific focus linked to the three research objectives: to identify youth workers' experiences of youth work practice, to explore youth workers' experiences of spirituality and how (or if) spirituality impacts their youth work practice.

This IPA study found that spirituality impacted youth workers' practice even with youth workers who do not see themselves as spiritual. Four superordinate themes relevant to youth workers experiences of spirituality were identified: *Spiritual Needs, The Spirit of Youth Workers, The Changing Youth Work Identity* and *Redundancy Induced Loss*. When asked about spirituality youth workers spoke about redundancy, restructures and their experience of loss, bereavement, and professional identity.

This research was conducted authentically with the topic of spirituality and with the IPA approach. As a Spiritually Reflexive Researcher, I used freewriting techniques (Elbow 1973) in reflective journals throughout data collection and analysis. Bracketing interviews with a *skilled bracketer* (Rolls and Relf 2006) identified bias or areas for reflection unknown to the researcher. The two reflexive techniques led to the development of two experiential models: The Researcher's Experiential Data Collection Journey and The Participants' Experiential Research Journey.

Whilst the youth work sector, within faith-based and secular youth work, is faced with more redundancies and cuts to the public sector, much can be learnt from the experiences of loss from the youth workers. The consideration of a spiritually compassionate redundancy process should be part of all organisations as they consider the bereavement-like impact of redundancy on staff.

Acknowledgements

My PhD has lived alongside family life, work, and everything else for a few years now. It has been a long juggle, and the plan was never to put life on hold. Thank you, Ant, for your encouragement and support. To Emilia and Isaac, I love you both – I hope you are inspired to follow your dreams.

Thank you to my amazing supervisory team, Dr Gill Cressey, Dr Geraldine Brady and Dr Rob James, for your fantastic support, mentoring and commitment throughout this journey. Our cafe-based supervision sessions have been motivational, useful and a real joy!

To my colleagues at Coventry University, thank you for the opportunity to “do a PhD”. Thank you to my family for food, fun, distractions, and focus. To Esmé and Shirley, thank you for your inspiration, company and conversations along the way. Thank you to the networks and research communities I have connected with at conferences, on social media and in person. The opportunity to connect with others has been vital.

Finally, thank you to my research participants - the youth workers and managers – you know who you are. I am so grateful for the time you took to explore youth work and spirituality with me. Thank you!

Abbreviations

APPG	All-Party Parliamentary Group
CAF	Common Assessment Framework
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DES	Department for Education and Science
DfE	Department for Education
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
DoH	Department of Health
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
ECM	Every Child Matters
IDYW	In Defence of Youth Work
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IYW	Institute for Youth Work
JNC	Joint Negotiating Committee
LAC	Looked After Children
LGA	Local Government Association
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
NCS	National Citizen Service
NEET	Not in Employment Education or Training
NYA	National Youth Agency
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RE	Religious Education

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This introduction gives a warrant for this research, the significance of the topic, motivation for embarking on an eight-year research journey and ends with a mini-map of chapters to come.

The youth work sector established the purpose of youth work in 2008, and this remains the latest statement of purpose used in the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (CLD 2019). The purpose of youth work is to:

> enable young people to develop holistically, working with them to facilitate their personal, social, and educational development, to enable them to develop their voice, influence, and place in society and to reach their full potential.
>
> (LLUK 2008: 4)

The purpose is connected strongly with four values that underpin youth work, and these are central to all youth work practice and development. The values are “participation and active involvement... equity, diversity and inclusion... partnership with young people and others... personal, social and political development” (LLUK 2008: 5). For youth workers, the functional map (See Figure 1) summarises key aspects of a youth workers’ role, although not all elements are necessarily included within each youth workers’ job. Of note to this research is the area "B1 - Facilitate the personal, social, spiritual and educational development of young people" (NYA 2014). Glimmers of spirituality within youth work are still evident in the current *National Occupational Standards for Youth Work* (CLD 2019), and this foregrounds what youth work is and provides an initial link to spirituality.

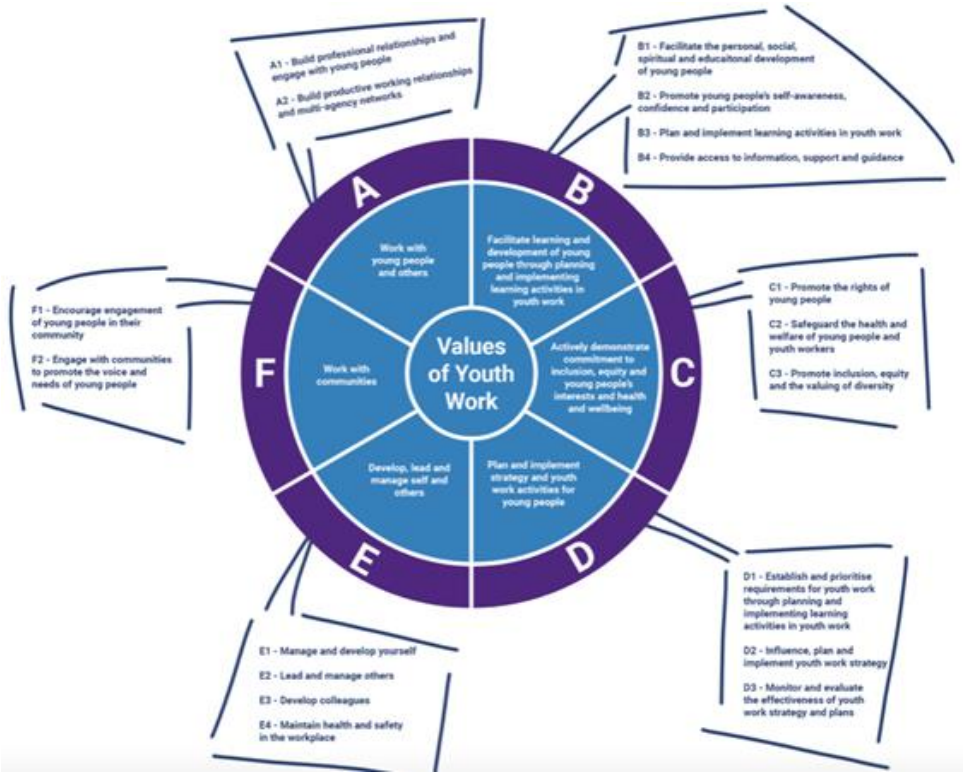

Figure 1 - Youth Work Functional Summary Graph (taken from NYA 2014)

This valuable profession has been dramatically affected over the last decade by extraordinary changes, and cuts to the youth services continue (de St Croix 2016; UNISON 2016). This decline in employment prospects in universal youth work has brought attention to the survival of the profession itself (Bright and Pugh 2019; Taylor 2009), reflecting on the loss of it (Harris-Evans 2017; Pugh 2019; Richards and Lewis 2018) or a hope for the future (APPG 2018).

Emerging from the millennium and before the *financial crisis* (Bell and Blanchflower 2011) there was an increasing interest in spirituality within youth work in the UK (Bullock and Pimlott 2008; Green 2006; Mason 2005; Nemko 2006). There was a call for support for youth workers to enable them to facilitate young people's spiritual development (LLUK 2008).

1.1 Why research youth workers' spirituality?

This research was conducted with youth workers around the impact spirituality has on their practice. In 2008, the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work included standard 1.1.4, "Encourage the Spiritual Development of Young People" (LLUK 2008), providing guidance about performance criteria, knowledge, and understanding. The standard was about:

> working with young people to explore ethical, moral, and cultural values, addressing the need to respect the beliefs and values of others. It includes exploring where young people are on their journeys through life and encouraging them to see themselves in terms of their relationships with others and the environment around them.
>
> (LLUK 2008: 15)

The expectation was that youth workers should be working with young people to develop their spirituality in any context. Although, for many, it was unclear what this would look like. In the United Kingdom, several guidance books for youth workers were written to support youth workers in exploring this further. They provided them with *spiritual activities* and drew together definitions of spirituality to increase youth workers' knowledge and understanding (Bullock and Pimlott 2008; Green 2006; Nemko 2006). Replicated in the United States, the practice, and academic conversations about how to include spiritual development within youth work and how to prepare youth workers in training (Cheon and Canda 2010; Kimball 2008; Quinn 2008), were alongside my own journey as a youth worker, looking at developing young people's spirituality in a school-based youth club.

However, in 2012 the NOS for Youth Work revision removed the emphasis on *spiritual development* and replaced it with *values and beliefs*. The standard LSI YW14 "Facilitate young people's exploration of their values and beliefs" now briefly mention spirituality as one of the "broad spectrums of topics" that values and beliefs encompass.

> Such as community, cultural values, discrimination, environment, ethics, faith, global issues, health, ideological beliefs, inter- and intra-group or community conflict, morality, philosophical beliefs, political views, relationships, religious beliefs, and spirituality, including convictions of non-belief.
>
> The standard includes enabling young people to increase the sense of their own value through self-awareness and to build their self-esteem. It facilitates young people to think critically about the values and beliefs they hold, how they have acquired these and to understand the positive

> and negative effects these may have on their lives and the lives of others.
>
> (LSIS 2012: 67)

There is an unclear rationale for this change in the inclusion of Spiritual Development with the NOS. Still, it may be due to the lack of evidence about spiritual development within youth work aside from in a faith-based setting (Davies 2010). Being based in a school setting when I initially began thinking about spiritual development with youth workers, I naturally inclined to educational theory and guidance about young people that identify young people holistically and include spirituality (DfE 2014; Ofsted 2019). In this thesis, I have taken the view that "every person is a spiritual person, whether or not they recognise it" (Jewell 2011: 4).

Studies around youth work and spirituality have examined faith-based youth workers' understanding of spiritual development (Dallas 2009; McFeeters 2010; Scales et al. 1995; Strommen, Jones, and Rahn 2001). Some work compares the faith-based and community-based youth workers' experiences of spiritual development with young people (Garza, Artman, and Roehlekepartain 2007). However, there has not been a study in England exploring youth workers' spirituality experiences within secular contexts. This study provides additional insight into the UK youth workers workplace spirituality in youth work, especially when they may not have a remit to deliver this to young people as a specific subject or in a particular faith context. It captures the changes in the youth work sector currently, focusing on youth workers' careers and spirituality's role upon them. It is important to consider spirituality as it relates to both young people and youth workers' careers.

Working with young people to develop their spirituality still seems of value. Following the practice guidance, it seems appropriate to consider researching youth workers' own experiences of spirituality as they prepare to work with young people (Kimball 2008). This research may help those involved and those who read it to consider definitions of spirituality and, therefore, spirituality in youth work practice. The study might lead to change in either the participants' youth work practice, general youth workers, or policy change and an impact on the revision of the NOS for youth work in the future.

It is not clear what the impact of spirituality is on youth work practice, and so gaining the experiences of youth workers around this area is essential. The study builds on and

contributes to work on the practitioner perspective of spirituality in the helping professions, most relevantly with other practitioners who work with young people, such as teachers. It will hear youth workers' experiences of spirituality and identify how this impacts their practice. This study's foundations are based on the historical and current youth work field of writing but draw on education, children and young people's spirituality, and spirituality in the workplace literature.

As a society, we embrace practical spiritual tools such as mindfulness for stress reduction (Kabat-Zinn 2013) and meditation using the subscription-based mobile phone apps Headspace (Puddicombe 2012). It may be helpful for youth workers to consider spirituality further. As spirituality is popularised, it is an area not ignored by young people. Considering youth workers' well-being and the impact of cuts in the youth work sector (UNISON 2016), there may be something to learn about the role spirituality plays for them.

1.2 The research aims and objectives

The research question: Do youth workers' experiences of spirituality have an impact on their youth work practice?

1.2.1 Overview of methods

This section provides a brief overview of the research methodology and methods; a full account of this is given in the methodology and methods chapter. This study is qualitative (Savin Baden and Howell Major 2013), phenomenological (Heidegger 2010) and longitudinal drawing from narrative inquiry influences (Elliott 2009) and longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Farr and Nizza 2019). It has a practice-based phenomenological approach to this research, like Finlay (2011) with Occupational Therapists. In researching youth workers' experiences, Anderson-Nathe (2005, 2010) used a phenomenological approach to capture their experiences. The practice-based spirituality research by West (2004) argues for the use of a qualitative phenomenological approach when researching spirituality. Hay and Nye (2006), in their study with children about spirituality, embraced this phenomenological approach to underpin exploring humans' experiences of spirituality.

This study aims to capture the youth workers' rich experiences around their practice and spirituality, which will then be analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). This research is the first study in England to

take a longitudinal analysis of the phenomenon of spirituality with secular youth workers during a critical period of change in the profession, drawing on their individual experiences of youth work and spirituality.

1.2.2 Aims and objectives

This research aims to explore youth workers' experiences of spirituality and the effect it has on their youth work practice.

There are three objectives in the data collection phase:

1. To identify youth workers' experiences of youth work practice.
2. To explore youth workers' experiences of spirituality.
3. To capture youth worker connections between spirituality and their youth work.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine youth workers from the Midlands, UK, aiming to capture experiences of their youth work and spirituality. This took the form of a longitudinal study as it was collected over 18 months to capture changes over time in the workplace (Flowers 2008). There were three phases of interviews, addressing a fundamental question in each stage: What is your experience of youth work? What is your experience of spirituality? Does spirituality have an impact on your youth work practice?

The data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) and superordinate themes were identified across all the participants. In total, four superordinate themes were found:

1. Spiritual needs.
2. The spirit of youth workers.
3. The changing youth work identity.
4. Redundancy induced loss.

These are examined in more depth in the finding's chapters. The reader should bear in mind the study is based on the experience of nine youth workers in the Midlands, at a particular moment in time. If this research had been conducted at the point when spirituality was being researched a little more in youth work, or if the current austerity and funding crisis did not exist the findings may be different. A key aspect of IPA is the results capture the experiences of individuals (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). While

superordinate themes have been identified drawing on the experiences of the nine youth workers over 18 months, they are not generalisable. Still, these themes may connect or reverberate with the experience of others.

1.3 My spiritual journey and career pathway.

Throughout this PhD journey, I have been writing in reflective journals. The journals capture poignant moments in the research, where I have grown, reflected, or changed as a researcher. Excerpts are inserted throughout the thesis where appropriate. At this point in the introduction, an extended reflective piece is included to establish memorable moments in my own spiritual youth work journey, including my childhood religious experiences, entry into the youth work career, and my journey with career meaning and purpose.

> I grew up in a small town on the South coast. Throughout most of my childhood, we took part in school-based community activities and weekly church services. But it wasn't until we moved to the West Country when I was ten that spirituality came alive to me. That Easter, I attended a church outreach event, and in response to a talk by a youth worker, I became a Christian that night at home. It was transformational for me, and I became more involved within my local church, with my family and friends from school; and involved throughout my teenage years.
>
> Church first introduced me to youth work where I volunteered at youth club nights and ran a community radio show. Volunteering as a church youth worker, led to me volunteering with the local council detached project, running after-school sessions. I developed a heart for young people and youth work. My youth workers offered support as positive role models. I saw the benefits of the informal, trusting and regular relationship that can positively impact young people. Youth work became a potential career option, but I decided to train as a teacher, hoping that would always provide me with a "stable income" instead.
>
> I went to University to train as a Primary Mathematics teacher. I loved my time at University, but, towards the end of the second year, I had a

pivotal school placement that shook my confidence and made me question whether this was the career for me. At the point of wanting to quit, my family and friends encouraged me to meet with my placement tutor again and get back on with the placement and give it my all. Determined to complete my degree, I carried on, and I graduated two years later.

The calling towards youth work stayed with me, and the desire to support young people, to give them more one to one attention, drew me once again to youth work and rather than applying for teaching vacancies I started applying for youth work jobs. I had felt a "calling" into youth work, and I wanted to move into that; based on my spirituality and my Christian faith. I felt release from the need to teach and there were many options available to me. I started my first youth work post attached to a church. I was working in the community and involved in the local primary school doing assemblies, running a choir and running holiday club activities. This job felt like the right place, and I enjoyed incorporating youth work with primary school work. The church encouraged me to become qualified as a youth worker and also sponsored me to attend University, which opened my eyes to the much wider remit of youth work, outside faith-based youth work.

After I qualified as a youth worker, I worked in a variety of other settings including young carers work, school-based work, youth clubs, voluntary sector management, project-based work, youth volunteering, youth mentoring, rural youth work and detached work. I went on to my Masters in youth work, and at that time began questioning the role of a broader spirituality within more generic and universal youth work. Was there a place for spirituality in youth work, and what would that look like? While in school-based youth work, I coordinated a multi-agency group running lunchtime and after school activities; the role of a spiritual youth worker became more interesting to me.

My reflective journal

This PhD research was initially conceived during my time as a youth worker in a multi-agency school-based setting between 2005 and 2008. As a regional youth worker employed by the Church of England Diocese, my role was to engage and support young people in the local areas and schools. The emphasis was on community-based work, but my employers had a spiritual concern. In my youth work capacity, I was keen to see how I could work with young people around broad spiritual areas of meaning, purpose, motivation, and hope beyond developing young people's spirituality in churches.

I was part of the school multi-agency youth team including local authority youth workers, school health team, Connexions mentors, drugs workers, young carers workers, school learning mentors, and sexual health workers. Our team had clear aims and goals set by

their organisations about how to support young people. The Diocese were keen I supported young people in the schools; this sparked my interest in what would spiritual youth work look like if that was my specialism in the multi-agency team.

My dissertation for my Masters in Youth and Community Work was a piece of Action Research about how Youth Work practice could be improved by understanding young people's spirituality. I spoke with groups of young people ranging from 11 – 19 who were not explicitly spiritual, but known to me, about what spirituality meant to them. National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (1.1.4 LLUK 2008) indicated that youth workers should encourage young people's spiritual development. So asking young people seemed a good starting point for my research. All were able to talk about spirituality to a degree, either in the third or first person. They all gave examples of spiritual experiences, and they were comfortable speaking about spirituality. They used a language regarding spirituality that they were comfortable using either from education, such as their Philosophy A-Levels, or culture. They compared spirituality to Marmite, “you will either love it or hate it” (Bishop 2009). They were able to talk about spiritual practices such as journaling, meditation, and walking. The interviews were fun and resembled youth work conversations, albeit they were recorded and transcribed. Some of the young people were able to safely examine life's big questions, with a questioning and critical perspective on life. The thematic analysis helped clarify that youth workers need to initially speak with young people about spirituality and not be afraid of the paths this may lead to. It became clear to me that youth workers could be involved in that process of exploring spirituality as young people developed their own human identities. From my teacher training, I knew that spiritual development was always a part of the curriculum in primary schools, in Religious Education and Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE). The comparison and similarity between teachers and informal educators or youth workers seemed natural to me.

At the point of completing my action research, I was made redundant, so I could not use my dissertation research to explore how my youth work practice could be improved. I have, however, used my research as a starting point for this PhD thesis. I wanted to consider the youth workers’ perspective on spirituality and how their understanding might impact on their practice. I felt that my training as a primary teacher and my experience as an informal educator or youth work would help with this PhD research. My assumption was that every human has a spiritual aspect to them (Green 2006; Yust 2006). This could

be verbalised through religious affiliation, spiritual awareness, or search for purpose and meaning in life.

After completing my Masters, I took a job at a university lecturing in youth work which involved training youth workers and shaping their professional identities. I started my PhD and built on my master's research and explored youth workers' experiences of spirituality and whether it had an impact on their practice. For me, spirituality, in particular Christianity, had a profound effect on my early experiences of youth work and then my *calling* into youth work as a career. I wondered if youth workers in other non-faith-based settings could account for spiritual experiences that may have brought them into youth work or indeed sustained them within it. This time in history has been hostile towards youth work, as explored in the literature review. This changing landscape may mean spirituality is more important as a sense of purpose and identity may shift and change.

> In response to the cuts in youth work and youth services, the Youth Work degree was closed, and we saw the final students graduated in 2017. I now work as an Academic Developer running the PG Cert in Academic Practice in Higher Education. However, I would still view my own identity as a youth worker and a teacher. These two professional elements of my identity align with my spirituality and guide my approach to practice to include: equality; informality; value-driven, relationship-based; use of interactive techniques; and a belief that all are capable of growth and change. I see my students in a similar light to the young people I used to work with, and I am passionate about seeing them develop, learn and succeed, and find their own place in life. My spirituality and career pathway influence my approach to this research project and many of the decisions along the way.
>
> My reflective journal

This PhD is personal to me as a youth worker and within my spiritual journey. The next section provides an overview of the chapters and the structure of this thesis.

1.4 Mini-map of the chapters in the thesis

The overall structure of the study takes the form of ten chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter Two begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research and looks at *Knowing Youth Work, Knowing Spirituality, Knowing Young People* and then examines the empirical research with youth workers about spirituality. The third chapter is concerned with the methodology and methods used for this study. It examines the epistemology, positionality, reflexivity, data collection and data analysis using IPA. The fourth chapter introduces the findings of the research. It addresses the research aim

and objectives and introduces the participants. The four superordinate themes that arose out of the IPA:

1. Spiritual needs.
2. The spirit of youth workers.
3. The changing youth work identity.
4. Redundancy induced loss.

Chapters five, six, seven and eight, demonstrate the IPA of the four superordinate themes identified above. Chapter nine discusses the findings in response to the literature linking the theoretical and empirical strands, it considers how this research applies to theory, considers implications for practice, and future research. The conclusion, chapter ten, summarises the thesis and concludes the discussion refocussing on the question, does spirituality impact on youth workers' practice.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in spirituality within popular literature, paying attention to the benefits of mindfulness techniques that can reduce stress (Kabat-Zinn 2013, Williams, and Penman 2011), strategies to increase happiness (Harris 2015), and the importance of a meaning to life (Frankl 2011). The spiritual dimension of humans is acknowledged within youth work (Green 2006) and more widely in the caring and helping professions including counselling (West 2004, 2010), social work (Holloway and Moss 2010), and within education settings (Ota and Erricker 2005).

As a Youth Work practitioner, the interest in working with young people spiritually grew from my experience as a youth worker employed by an Anglican church, and subsequently in school settings. The educational definition of spirituality was included in the curriculum and assessed by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Care). There was a shift in my focus from faith-based youth work to exploring spiritual concepts, experiences, and knowledge with young people. The National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (LLUK 2008) stated youth workers should work with young people to develop their spirituality. The need to explore spirituality within the professional context became more relevant to my work first as a youth worker, and then as a youth work lecturer in a Higher Education setting, training other youth workers.

> I was interested in finding out how youth workers in a variety of non-faith-based settings paid attention to spirituality in their youth work. Whether that was with the young people directly, with staff, or in their reflective career pathways. I had not seen many of my youth work colleagues delivering, or even talking, about spirituality with young people. But was this something that they were aware of in their own lives? If so, how does that translate into their work lives. And if not, when they have explored their own experiences and reflected more deeply with me, would they now think that this has some impact? For example, I know that youth workers often feel a deep sense of calling into the field, but is this something they would call spirituality?
>
> (My reflective journal 2014)

2.1.1 Using the term spirituality in research

Although the British Humanist Association argued “some youth workers and young people may find the terminology of ‘spiritual’ and ‘spirituality’ off-putting or ambiguous” (Mason 2005:5), this is not supported in some of the key research with children and young people. For example, in their seminal research, Hay and Nye (2006) found children were able to explore their own beliefs and values through their interviews. In my own master's research, I found for young people the concept of spirituality, the language used to describe it, and their awareness of spiritual experiences was discussed at ease, although they struggled to describe spiritual experiences in the first person (Bishop 2009). Nonetheless, for youth workers, spirituality is often under-addressed in training, and may not be something they have personally reflected on (Fagg 2016; Green 2006). Green argued the “concept of love, care and spiritual health could just about creep into our practice clothed as well-being” (Green, in Daughtry and Devenish 2016: 264). It is questionable if this disguised version of spirituality is adequate when addressing personal meaning, hope, connections to others, transcendence, awe, and wonder, and many of the other spiritual concepts and practices. Mason (2005) argued for the youth work role in developing young people's spirituality “as schools find it more difficult to offer the experiences of nature and the outdoors, or of practical, artistic, and musical creativity” (Mason 2005: 5). The concept that spirituality may be the “amalgamation” of “emotional development, character formation, aesthetic emotions, moral development, socialisation, growing thoughtfulness” (Mason 2005: 6) seems in alignment with a youth work ethos. The role of the youth worker in developing spirituality could itself be a unique position to complement the school approach through Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE), citizenship and Religious Education (RE), and so warrants further research.

2.1.2 What type of literature review is this?

This literature review is narrative (Bryman 2012), allied with the interpretative nature of the research (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). It aims to identify relevant empirical research around youth work and spirituality, additionally drawing on literature that theorises youth work and spirituality and offers practical guidance for youth workers. This research is designed to be a reflective tool and useful for youth workers within secular settings, and in faith-based contexts. An exploration of spirituality and youth work is relevant to all practitioners who value supporting the urgent need of young people to consider life purpose and “existential questions” (Batsleer 2008: 128).

2.1.3 Knowing Youth Workers' Spirituality - The Venn diagram

To plan the literature search, Clough and Nutbrown (2012) suggest constructing a Venn diagram with the key themes of the research question. I created a Venn diagram (see Figure 2) which identifies the critical knowledge that positions this research; the three circles are: *Knowing Youth Work*, *Knowing Spirituality* and *Knowing Young People*. The research question *Does spirituality impact on youth workers' practice* sits within the overlap, or "intersection" (Clough and Nutbrown 2012: 111) of the *Knowing Youth Work* and *Knowing Spirituality* circles – *Youth workers' spirituality*. However, in knowing youth workers' spirituality, this cannot be detached from the *Knowing Young People* circle. Inspired by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory, the three circles need situating in their wider contexts.

Youth work in *Wider helping professions* (Robinson 2008; Schreurs 2001; West 2004) Spirituality in *Faith, religions, and worldviews* - an everyday spirituality will be of particular interest, rather than spirituality directly related to a specific religion (Drane 2005; Hyde 2008; Montgomery 2007) and Young People in the broader context of *Human beings in society*.

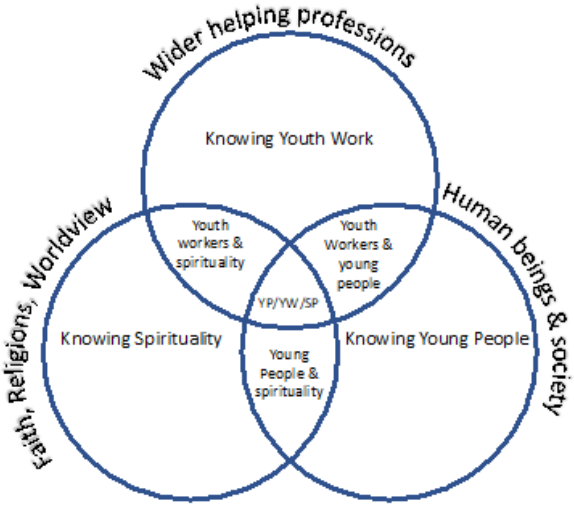

Figure 2 - Knowing youth workers' spirituality - Venn diagram

The structure of the literature review will link to the Venn diagram, beginning with attention to *Knowing Youth Work* (circle 1) moving on to *Knowing Spirituality* (circle 2) *Knowing Young People* (circle 3) and then focusing on the research question around *Youth Worker's Spirituality* in the intersection. Throughout this literature, review consideration is paid to the research connection with youth work and spirituality.

2.1.3.1 Knowing Youth Work

In defining youth work's purpose, values and ethics, a greater understanding of the impact of youth work will be gained. The Youth Work section will situate UK youth work in its spiritual roots, examine New Labour's contribution, and explore the changes that the Great Recession in 2008 (Bell and Blanchflower 2011), and years of austerity have had on the youth work sector. It will conclude with a glance to the future of youth work as seen in the latter end of 2019.

2.1.3.2 Knowing Spirituality

The spirituality section will examine key definitions of spirituality within work with young people and the links to wider parallel professions as they engage with spirituality. Key debates around religion and spirituality, the validity of spirituality, and definitions will be addressed here. Finally, definitions of spirituality, as used in this research, will be discussed.

2.1.3.3 Knowing Young People

The section will focus on the research with young people around spirituality and implications for the youth work practitioner. Youth workers reading this will be able to reflect on the individuality of the young people they work with as they consider their spiritual needs. Ethnicity, culture, disability, gender, sexuality will all impact on the construct of the young people's identities and should be considered in each context.

2.1.3.4 Youth Workers' Spirituality – Empirical Research

Having established the youth work context - spirituality within professional settings - and examined the young people whom youth workers engage with, the last section will focus on the research question and explore empirical research with youth workers about spirituality. In this section, the more extensive studies carried out in the USA will be examined, before focusing on the empirical, smaller research projects in the UK. The focus is on qualitative research that pays attention to the lived experiences of youth workers around spirituality. It will emphasise the secular, or community-based youth workers, rather than those within faith-based settings. The intention will be to find evidence of spirituality impacting on practice and draw out relevant themes that can be applicable to this research; it will consider methodological implications, limitations and good practice that can be employed here. It will provide the basis and justification for this

PhD research about youth workers' experiences of spirituality and its impact on their practice with young people and their careers.

2.2 Knowing Youth Work

This section will begin with an initial introduction to youth work and what it has become, a look back at the spiritual and educational roots of youth work, the ethos of youth work, focusing on definitions, ethics, purpose, and values up to when the research was conducted.

2.2.1 The purpose of Youth Work?

Youth work is at its heart more than a definition; it is about the principles and values that underpin the practice of youth work. Young (2006) describes youth work as being:

> based on a voluntary relationship with young people involving honesty, trust, respect, and reciprocity; and a youth work process that enables and supports young people to learn from their experience and develop themselves as authentic human beings – i.e., people who know themselves and are true to themselves.
>
> (Young 2006: 5)

The concept of a "voluntary relationship," or "voluntary participation," is arguably essential to the nature of youth work (Batsleer and Davies 2010; Taylor 2009). And a vision for young people being supported to become "authentic human beings" (Young 2006: 5) is crucial to the commitment of youth work. Within this research, the youth work definitions will remain in the 1990s and 2000s before the universal heart of youth work was "damaged" by the austerity cuts (UNISON 2011; UNISON 2016) and at the time when most of the participants trained and became professionally qualified youth workers (Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC)). During this time, the *Ethical code of conduct for youth workers*, the National Youth Agency identified the primary purpose of youth work to:

> facilitate and support young people's growth through dependence to interdependence, by encouraging their personal and social development and enabling them to have a voice, influence and place in their communities and societies.
>
> (NYA 2004)

Fundamental to this approach to working with young people is a "positive relationship," that is "conversation-based" and has an emphasis on "informal education" (Jeffs and Smith 2005). As informal educators, or youth workers, the concept of living with values

and having moral authority, in a broad sense, could relate to spirituality. “Thus, moral authority - being seen by others as people with integrity, wisdom and an understanding of right and wrong - is something we must seek and preserve.” (Jeffs and Smith 2005: 85). The definition of youth work, and how it evolved, will be addressed in the next section.

2.2.1.1 Moving from Universal Youth Work to Targeted Youth Support

It is worth contrasting what was meant by Universal Youth Work and Targeted Youth Support and how these youth work definitions were diluted by limited Governmental understanding of the value and impact of youth work, or a lack of evidence from the youth work profession for its value. As a result, the broad reach of open access youth work has been eroded over the last 15-20 years with a shift towards Target Youth Support (DfES 2007). This shift still upholds the notion *youths* are a problem to be solved, and the deficit model of youth work is where impact can be measured (Davies 2019). It implicates youth workers with a need for accountability of their youth work through targets that need to be met (Spence 2004). At this time funding was being directed through Targeted Youth Support (DfES 2007). Early Intervention or Early Help addressed specific groups of young people who were at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) (HM Government 2015), those who were Looked After Children (LACs) (DFE/DOH 2015), and work with those Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) (HM Government 2011).

2.2.1.2 National Citizen Service – a six-week replacement for year-round youth work.

More recently, the move by the Conservative party to install a National Citizen Service (NCS) for all young people over a six-week summer break as a measurable alternative to youth work, was met with dismay by many youth workers, and youth work organisations. Whilst providing *positive activities* for young people, it is a reduced offer in comparison to the same NCS budget being spent on a “year-round, community-based open access youth work provision” (Davies 2019: 208) that the Network of Regional Youth Work Units and In Defence of Youth Work (IDYW) were arguing for. The NCS vision was to establish “human flourishing and common good” through *The Big Society* (Pimlott 2017); however, continuing year-on-year to miss recruitment targets of young people (Lepper 2018), it also had issues with the recruitment of appropriately experienced, or qualified, staff who would not be able to improvise as many youth workers could.

> Most NCS staff were required to implement pre-planned session based on standardised content, timings, outcomes, and evaluations. With similar constraints operating within the social action activities, prima facie, the NCSs face to face practice thus differed substantially from the informal education approaches of an open access youth centre or a detached youth work project.
>
> (Davies 2019: 209)

To consider the current state of youth work de St Croix (2015) spoke with grassroots youth workers about their experiences within this climate of cuts and proving their value. She concluded: "open access youth work is under threat and yet is surviving as a passionate, principled and reflective practice that values equality, freedom and collective life" (2015: 2). The following section briefly explores the spiritual roots of youth work and compare it with the state of youth work in 2019.

2.2.2 The historical roots of youth work in the UK

2.2.2.1 The philanthropists

In historical terms, UK youth work arose as philanthropists saw an educational need to provide for young people. In the late 18th century, pioneers Hannah More and Robert Raikes established the Sunday School movement in response to the poor social and spiritual state of the UK at that time (Smith 2002). The origins of youth work were rooted in a desire to support and develop young people with specific attention to their spiritual needs. As the years progressed, and youth work developed, organisations like Scouts (Baden-Powell 1908), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA 1987), Youth Institutes (Solly 1867), Boys Brigade and Girl Guides began to appear, and the spiritual influence continued. Early youth work texts seemed to be rooted in spirituality, within the church and provided some foundation for the current youth work provision.

2.2.2.2 Youth Work Methods

Youth Work Methods by Walkey, Wills, and Motley (1931) has been identified as the first text to describe youth work as a practice (de St Croix 2016). This early youth work text is from a spiritual, or church-based, definition of youth work; Youth work was taken to mean "what is being done to win young people for Christ" (Walkey, Wills, and Motley 1931: 11). This purpose, or outcome, drives the guidance for *Youth Work Methods*, and the four essential elements Walkey defines are under the following sub-headings:

1. Leadership with a consecrated personality,
2. Keenness and unlimited patience,

3. To be objective with splendid vision,
4. Personal contact at all times.

(Walkey, Wills, and Motley 1931: 11)

The essence of this list will be familiar to today's youth worker, demonstrated through the development of professional qualifications (Belton and Frost 2010), and the importance of relationship in youth work (Jeffs and Smith 2005).

2.2.2.3 Church, Nation and Youth: Dangers and opportunities for the Church in the Governments' direction for Youth Work.

In 1942 Hemming was concerned with young people post school-leaving age, 14-year-olds, and identified the "age-group has been largely neglected in matters of education and general training" (Hemming 1942: 2). The move had been towards government organised local Youth Committees, and National Youth Committees, that would stimulate youth work in their areas. There was a promise of government funding for "good work," be it "closed" (like church work), or "open" youth work. Hemming identifies opportunities and dangers to the church surrounding the intervention from the Government but acknowledges the benefits of spiritual, or specifically church, youth work to address the person holistically. Resonating with the idea of the importance of "personal contact all the time" (Walkey, Wills and Motley 1931: 11) and evidenced in the report *The Cross in the Club* (Davison 1943) that describes insight into the lives of young people due to the lengthy time spent in air raid shelters with each other. This relationship led Davison to consider the use of churches as youth club venues for young people to socialise in. These early youth work texts continue to have spiritual roots, specifically within various denominations of the Christian faith.

2.2.2.4 Youth Centres: the "Godless places"

In *Youth Work and Health Education* (Brew 1943a) continued to value the spiritual elements of young people within the context of recovering as a nation through, and after, the war. However, Brew recognised that since the local authorities established the Youth Centres:

> these centres are large and successful; they have been accused of variously taking away young people from their former allegiance of the church clubs and being "godless places."
>
> (Brew 1943b: 142)

To consider the concept of youth centres as “godless places” links to the perhaps negative relationship and polarised nature of the church, or closed, youth work and open youth work. Spirituality, in the form of daily prayers at military youth organisations, was seen as a “problematic last straw in a chaotic universe” (Brew 1943b: 144). Where the phrase “in the midst of life, we are in death was commonplace” (Brew 1943b: 144) amongst young people at war, where imminent danger and threat to life was present. The move towards youth work and an absence of spirituality was beginning to be more common.

2.2.2.5 The Albemarle Report - Reviving the Youth Service in the 1960s

After World War II, in the 1950s and 1960s, youth work was struggling and needed another government-led intervention. The Albemarle Committee was commissioned to examine the situation of youth work and make recommendations. The report began:

> all over the country and in every part of the Service there are devoted workers...But in general, we believe it true to say that those who work in the Service feel themselves neglected and held in small regard, both in educational circles, and by public opinion generally. We have been told time and again that the Youth Service is "dying on its feet" or "out on a limb"… They gave us the firm impression (and again this was supported by our observations) that a properly nourished Youth Service is profoundly worthwhile and that it is of special importance in a society subject to the kinds of changes noted above.
>
> (HMSO 1960: 1)

This crucial report revived the Youth Service in the 1960s identifying key aspects such as “voluntary attendance”. It injected much need funding from central government for leadership development, youth worker training, and investment into buildings. The current situation could be described as echoes of the pre-Albemarle past: “much change needed” and “dying on its feet” (HMSO 1960: 1). Albemarle led an urgency for “improvement of a revivified Youth Service” (HMSO 1960: 1). The linguistic metaphors of Albemarle are health and life driven, inspiring to bring a service back to life, balancing giving “blood transfusions” as a short-term fix with measures to give sustained nourishment to see long term healthy growth. Lord Pakenham clearly expressed:

> I myself am very glad, as I believe others will be, that the Albemarle Report develops what I would call the overwhelming permanent arguments for an adequate Youth Service such as we have not yet possessed; and those permanent arguments would not lose their force if the rate of juvenile delinquency were, for example, halved to-morrow.
>
> (HL Deb 18 May 1960)

Following the Albemarle report the number of youth work training courses increased and from only two providers at Westhill and Swansea grew to over 67 institutions at its peak (NYA 2017). Youth centres were built in all local authorities, and the number of full time and sessional youth workers increased. Youth services thrived, and the “sustained nourishment” given seemed to be positive for both local authority and voluntary sectors (NYA 2007).

2.2.2.6 The Thatcherite influence on youth work

During the 1970s, local authorities were secure in their role with youth work. Although the nourishment of the 1960s had relaxed, the youth service seemed here to stay (de St. Croix in Gilchrist et al. 2011: 308). There had been a vibrancy in situated community work with youth workers and young people until the 1980s with a “collective struggle for transformation” (Batsleer 2013: 180). However, the public perception of young people was beginning to be increasingly negative, with a growing fear of young people (Cohen 1973). The government saw a need to take control and be more authoritative; “it was this corrosive impetus that characterised the Thatcherite 'law and order' debates during the 1980s” (Caley 2019).

In the 1980s, under Thatcherism, unemployment had risen to more than two million (Caley 2019), a generation of young people had been impacted by the threat of unemployment and its reality (Roche et al. 2004: 8). In response to the rising levels of unemployment Thatcher's government introduced objectives and targets for the youth service, requiring them to improve young people’s job skills and prevent crime (De St Croix in Gilchrist et al. 2011: 310). The government also introduced the contentious (Jeffs 1982) Youth Training Scheme delivered by Manpower Service Commission (Davies 1999; Roche et al. 2004: 104). To reduce the numbers of young people in unemployment, Thatcher's government changed the unemployment measures nineteen times to improve the reported statistics (Holborn and Langley 2002). It was becoming apparent that the concept of youth unemployment was no longer temporary (Furlong et al. 2018).

The Thompson Report (HMSO: 1982) was commissioned to review the youth service in Thatcher's early years, not unlike Albemarle. The Thompson Report spoke out about *deprivation and injustice* for young people. It advocated for *person-centred values* to working with young people. It promoted the youth service as central to youth work

delivery to ensure sufficient provision (Davies 1999: 24). Sadly, the Thompson Report had a negligible impact on the next few years of youth work.

Thatcher's government firmly focused on education standards by introducing Ofsted and the National Curriculum (Education Reform Act: 1988). Thatcher famously claimed there is "no such thing as society, only family life" (Abbott and Wallace 1989). They were shifting the social attitudes and values away from the 1970's liberal ways to the reestablishment of Victorian values, which focus on individual responsibility and helping yourself (Davies 1999: 93). The impact of the harsh economic climate and cuts to the welfare state led to a sense of trauma that motivated an *active generation* of young people (Furlong 2013: 15). Whilst youth service areas had cuts and closures, the voluntary sector grew (Davies 1999: 12). The youth service became more involved in issue-based youth work: anti-discriminatory practice (Thompson 2006), anti-racism (Aluffi-Pentini and Lorenz 1996), work with young black people (Sallah and Howson 2007), work with girls and women (Batsleer 2013; Spence 1996) to name a few. The 1980s captured the idea of the individual in a family context but shunned the notion of community, and the individualistic approach to youth work continued to run into the 1990s (Davies 1999: 12).

2.2.3 New Labour Youth Work - Change numbering

2.2.3.1 The "holy grail" of youth policy

As New Labour moved into power, many youth workers were excited about the prospects of once again nourishing youth work, but instead, the "holy grail" of youth policy was being chased (Wylie 2008). The Victoria Climbié Inquiry drove the government's priorities for youth policy*. An inquiry led by Lord Laming (*2003) in response to the serious case review about the death of Victoria Climbié; a need for effective multi-agency working was in part fulfilled by *Every Child Matters (ECM)* (DfES 2003) with young people at the heart of all youth work. The New Labour government saw the continued value of youth work with the *Transforming Youth Work* agenda (DfEE 2001). Then Resourcing Excellent Youth Services (DfES 2002) pledged to provide "a safe, warm, well equipped meeting place within reasonable distance of home, accessible to young people at time defined by young people" (DfES 2002: 2). When *Youth Matters* (DfES 2005) was launched, though attempting to be positive, "ministers remained largely negative about the service" (Davies 2008). *Youth Matters: Next Steps: Something to do, Somewhere to Go and Someone to Talk to* (DfES 2006), saw the introduction of "One-stop shops" to provide

“information advice and guidance” relying heavily on young people being “willing and confident enough to seek them out via a pre-defined formal route” (Davies 2019: 49). With the introduction of Connexions services and Connexions Personal Advisors, the government saw a need to improve youth work to support the success of Connexions (Wylie 2008).

In 2007, a nationwide management development programme was launched through the Children's Workforce Development Council (DfES 2006). It aimed to increase knowledge and capacity of front-line managers, strategic managers, and support the development of youth provision across all sectors; similarities with the Albemarle priorities for training are apparent. Youth work in this era was housed within the Children's Workforce Strategy (2006) supporting ECM (DfES 2003). The vision for Integrated Youth Support Services was a move away from isolated youth work provision and an attempt to formalise the organic collaborative provision by joining up the services (NYA 2007). In my experience in the Midlands, this was with Voluntary Youth Sector, Statutory provision, and Youth Offending Services, although its success depended on local interpretations and collaborations and complemented the Targeted Youth Support (DfES 2007). The revised Children Act (DCSF 2004) brought in the Common Assessment Framework and issues of safeguarding, and team approaches kept multi-agency working a priority. The Labour government recognised in *Aiming High for Young People*:

> high-quality youth work, delivered by third and statutory sectors, is central to delivering our ambition of increasing the number of young people on the path to success and an important function of integrated youth support services.
>
> (DCSF 2007)

2.2.3.2 The professionalisation of youth work

Key national youth work bodies supported the professionalisation of youth work. As National Occupational Standards were initiated, and then regularly reviewed (PAULO 2002, LLUK 2008), the purpose, principles and ethics that underpin professional youth work became more evident. The Albemarle recommendations (HSMO 1960) had established a sound foundation to train qualified youth workers who would take forward the vision of youth work and train up future generations of youth workers. The roots of youth work in educational development remained, as the national training organisation

PAULO took on the task of writing the National Occupational Standards for providers of youth work under the umbrella of community education.

However, while the youth work professionalisation continued, the decline of youth work courses providing professionally qualifying routes into youth work was rapid, and with an increase in tuition fees in 2010 (Coughlan 2010) and cuts to the youth work sector, the training providers were now down from sixty-four to thirty-two (NYA 2017).

2.2.3.3 The principles and practice of youth work – Informal education

Youth work is embodied by the notion of informal educators who value conversation, relationships and "going with the flow" in youth work practice. For many, informal education as a practice, remains at the heart of youth work (Batsleer 2008; Jeffs and Smith 2005; Davies, Taylor, and Thompson 2015). Seminal writers in this area define informal education to be:

> the process of fostering learning in life as it is lived. A concern with community and conversation; a focus on people as persons rather than objects, a readiness to educate in different settings.
>
> (Jeffs and Smith 2005: 8)

The uniqueness of youth work was described as the only educationalists that focused on young people and their transition to independence (Ingram and Harris 2001). But this was being threatened in the 1990s. Ingram and Harris then reflected on the changes to youth work after cuts in the 1980s. The discourse then was around implementing a youth work curriculum, increased public accountability, health and safety and child protection regulations, alongside budgets becoming restricted.

> The culture of youth work has changed. Youth work is no longer spontaneous; planning is an absolute requirement, as is the paperwork that goes with it. Youth work is under scrutiny and in the public view, more than ever.
>
> (Ingram and Harris 2001: 14)

Observing now with hindsight they accurately predicted "youth work will simply be incorporated into other agencies" (Ingram and Harris 2001: 15) if youth workers are not able to embrace the changes. Attaching blame to practitioners for not embracing change seems problematic; It pushes the responsibility for the failure of the youth work profession on to the individual youth worker, rather than focusing on the systemic and societal problems that are the catalyst for these changes.

2.2.3.4 Youth Work values

The four cornerstones of youth work: participation, empowerment, equality of opportunity and education, underpin practice and the voluntary engagement of young people with youth workers, as expressed in the Albemarle report (HMSO 1960) and are still critical to youth work practice (Davies, Taylor, and Thompson 2015; Taylor 2009). To further elaborate on the cornerstones, Banks (2010) argued youth work had the following characteristics and values.

> A voluntary relationship with young people, who are free to choose whether or not to be involved,
>
> An informal educational process that starts where young people are starting and seeks to go beyond where young people start by encouraging them to be outward-looking, critical, and creative in their responses to their experiences and the world around them.
>
> The value of association which involves young people working together in groups fostering supportive relationships and sharing a common life.
>
> The value of young people participating democratically and as fully as possible in making a decision about issues that affect them in youth work contexts and in life generally.
>
> (Banks 2010: 10)

As UK youth work moved closer to professionalism over the last two decades, the ethics that governed the professional practice became sharper. The NYA (2004) summarised youth workers should commit to the following ethical principles:

> 1. Treat young people with respect
> 2. Respect and promote young people's rights to make their own decisions and choices
> 3. Promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people
> 4. Promote and contribute towards the promotion of social justice.
>
> (NYA 2004: 6)

and the following professional **principles**:

> 5. Recognise the boundaries between personal and professional life
> 6. Recognise the need to be accountable to young people
> 7. Develop and maintain the required skills and competence
> 8. Work for conditions in employing agencies where these principles are discussed, evaluated, and upheld.

(NYA 2004: 6)

The ethical guidelines and principles and values are focused narrowly within England and it would be worth looking at the differences across the UK, as Brooker (2016) did internationally. Youth work in the late 1990s and early 2000s saw investment in the future of leadership in youth work and providing for new buildings through the My Place fund (Davies 2019). Positive activities with young people were growing (Davies 2019) and it could be argued, while issues and stress existed, it all paled when, in 2008, the banking crisis hit, and the Great Recession began (Bell and Blanchflower 2011).

2.2.4 Youth Work following the Great Recession: Change and Loss

The subtle shift in semantics from *youth work*, to *working with young people* predicated the move where we currently see youth workers being rehoused in social care, education settings and youth offending institutes. Still able to remain youth workers at heart but required to be seen professionally as part of the children's and young people's workforce (McNamara, Lawley and Trowler 2007/2008). The current political climate in society was impacted heavily by the Great Recession of 2008 (Bell and Blanchflower 2011). With the following years of recession, austerity (Summers 2009) and the now precarious future with BREXIT; young people were affected by the stresses of living in an uncertain society where their jobs are under threat, and their future is unpredictable. In the UK labour market, the effects of unemployment for young people are likely to impact on into the future (Bell and Blanchflower 2011). There is a significant increase in mental health issues amongst young people with three in five young people experiencing a mental health problem (MIND 2019). Rises in gun and knife crime are of concern (APPG 2019). This could be symptomatic of the youth work cuts (UNISON 2014), or evidence for the need for more youth work. A link to the value of youth work is like a *ghost* in the room (Bright and Pugh 2019; Derrida 1994). The UNISON report (2016) shared a respondent quote as:

> targeted early prevention work will be swallowed up by children's social care – youth work professionals will become social work support service and lose their professional identity.
>
> (UNISON 2016)

2.2.4.1 Changes and loss in the youth work sector

The loss of the youth work professional identity as a distinct area of practice is the point in history where this research is being conducted.

> Youth work is currently concerned with its demise in a context of widespread cuts to youth services. The decrease in funding for youth work on a national scale raises questions about the capacity and willingness of youth workers to think about wider issues with young people particularly as youth work faces its own potential "death."
>
> (Bishop 2015: 10)

The literature about workplace redundancy, cuts and restructures likens the effects of this on employees as similar to grief (Vickers 2009). With many organisations assuming workers should be "flexible and resilient," but the workers reported "significant negative outcomes, including fear for the future, underemployment, family disruptions and an erosion of trust" (Vickers and Parris 2007: 113)

2.2.4.2 Young people and loss of service provision

In the youth work sector, several poignant, reflective articles capture the effects of the "threat" of youth work redundancy on young people (Bright, Pugh and Clark 2018). The young people who were spoken to share their experience as they campaigned to save their services "likening it to an experience of loss or bereavement" (Pugh 2019: 2).

> And after all the cuts and things it was just the worst, it felt like someone had died. Because I have been seeing this person once or twice a week for years and then no more. I can't see them anymore. That was it.
>
> (Jade in Bright, Pugh, and Clark 2018: 320)

Considering the experiences of young people in the changes of the youth work sector is important. More research into the effects on young people is needed.

.2.4.3 Loss of youth work training in Universities

As youth work degree programmes close (NYA 2017) the effect on lecturers, many of whom qualified youth workers themselves, (Richards and Lewis 2018) is evident in the final part of a reflective poem that describes the effects of loss:

> Our course has been closed
>
> We saw it coming
>
> Falling numbers

An inability to meet recruitment targets
Its relevance to a disappearing profession
The inevitable logic of viability
Now euthanised
Bringing a sense of relief
No more apologies and false promises
But confirmation of that dreaded sense of shame and failure

Now walking the embers of a lost tradition
A strange disconnect
And shame
A dismembering
A fragmented team
A struggle for identity and purpose
A loss of place and belonging
We need to acknowledge the loss
And provide space to grieve

The ghost of Albemarle lingers
Refusing to let go
Its legacy
An embodied sense of value
Migrating into new territories
Providing hope for the future.
(Richards and Lewis 2018)

The feelings here resonate with my own experiences of loss as our BA in Youth Work closed in 2017. With notable colleagues asking me: “aren’t you over that yet;” the insensitivity in responding to a bereavement would be shocking if this was in relation to that of a person (Pugh 2019).

2.2.4.4 The death of a service (Pugh 2019)

The link to loss is taken further in *The death of a service* (Pugh 2019) which presents a post-mortem, obituary and eulogy response for a youth work organisation that she

worked at as a newly qualified worker. As she describes the success of a campaign to save the youth work provision through online petitions and activities led by young people, Pugh (2019) then reflects on the reversal of this 18 months later when:

> a further restructure made most staff redundant, announced the closure of the premises, and shifted the ethos and content of any remaining provision to such an extent, that it is hard to argue that anything remained. There was no recognition of this closure… its passing was hidden.
>
> (Pugh 2019: 1)

The quiet passing of the service is likened here to a "'non-death' providing no opportunity to grieve or question" (Pugh 2019: 1).

2.2.4.5 Grief theory to understand youth work cuts

For this research, a recognition of grief theory is helpful as a basis to consider the possible responses of the youth work practitioners that are to be interviewed. Kubler-Ross's (1970) classic five-step grief process of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance may be evident as the youth workers deal with restructure, threat of redundancy and the national demise of the youth work profession (Richards and Lewis 2018). However, many of the traditional youth work texts (Jeffs and Smith 2010; Sapin 2013) do not address loss or grief within them. Batsleer (2008: 129) does however highlight the importance of youth workers paying *more attention* to the impact of death on young people. With a hope that youth workers who

> work with young people's life narrative and meaning-making will also… have the confidence to be there with them at times of death and loss, when the meaning breaks down, and to offer a framework within which the beginnings of a process of meaning-reconstruction can occur (Thompson, 2002).
>
> (Batsleer 2008: 129)

Linking this back to spirituality the impact of a significant change such as bereavement, like redundancy, could be a catalyst for spiritual change (Balk 1999). For the youth workers interviewed it is important to consider the impact of change on their own well-being, and spirituality.

2.2.5 Future hope for youth work

Concerning youth services, UNISON (2016) hoped this would be made a statutory provision again, but still in 2019, this is not the case (Davies 2019). However, youth work

is more than just a solution to the *problem* of youth. The hope of youth work is in its voluntary connections with young people, its home within communities, creating personal growth through positive relationships, and positive influence with young people as they make multiple transitions towards adulthood. Tony Taylor founded In Defence of Youth Work (Taylor 2009) with an open letter advocating for traditional youth work with the emphasis on voluntary participation. Even so, Taylor argues youth work's:

> present unpopularity is due to the fact that its open and improvisatory practice is explicitly at odds with the dominant neoliberal agenda of individualised social conformity.
>
> (Davies, Taylor, and Thompson 2015: 93)

2.2.5.1 Positive Youth Development – a model to measure impact?

The debates around what youth work will be tap into the international concept of positive youth development (PYD) (Lerner, Roeser, and Phelps 2008). With roots in positive psychology (Seligman 2004) and ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner 1979), PYD has a focus on strength-based work. This is a refreshing break from the view young people are a problem to be fixed and advocates a scientific, empirical-based intervention method that can be measured and justified. In the climate of measuring impact, this approach to youth work has been seen as the answer to the demise of youth work in the UK (Stuart and Maynard 2015). Spirituality features in the literature around PYD and positive psychology – advocating for meaning and purpose. However, many UK based youth workers, primarily aligned with the In Defence of Youth Work movement, would argue they have always approached work with young people in this manner, and the universality of youth work allowed for this (Davies, Taylor, and Thompson 2015). However, highly planned, curriculum and outcome-based scientific methods are not the easy answer to a new form of youth work as described in the Brathay Trust case study (Stuart and Maynard 2015). With the move towards budgets cuts, and much Universal youth work provision being closed, buildings sold, and staff remoulded to become targeted problem solvers, this may be hard to prioritise (Davies 2019).

2.2.5.2 APPG for Youth Affairs

In response to consultations, including the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Youth Affairs (APPG 2018), and recent campaigns the government has made a move towards a Youth Charter that will:

> reaffirm Government's commitment to give young people a strong voice on the issues they care about such as combating serious violence and knife crime, addressing mental and physical health challenges and concerns about the environment and climate change.
>
> (APPG 2018)

Once again, this is a problem-based discourse, arising out of the Prime Minister's Serious Youth Violence Summit (2019) around tackling knife crime. It is a shame the words of Lord Packenham were not heeded in the call for a *permanent argument* (HMSO 1960) for the value of youth work. However, the commitment to review the youth work training curriculum, subject to a business case should help to revivify the youth service once again.

2.2.6 In summary

This contextual outline of youth work's early spiritual roots, the growth of the youth service and then the cuts, help provide a context for the time in history that the youth work participants in this study were interviewed. The question whether spirituality has an impact on their youth work practice, can be seen as valid in the light of the original roots of youth work. The consideration of spiritual development for youth work in secular and/or spiritual settings is explored further in the next chapter but remains current from Walkey, Wills and Motley (1931) to now, with Daughtry and Devenish (2016) exploring this in their essential text *Spirituality for Youth Work*. The current youth work climate of cuts within the Great Recession justifies the longitudinal nature of the interviews that listen to the voice of the youth workers at this crucial time in their careers and historically capturing change within youth work. The following section looks in more detail at spirituality and youth work drawing on relevant literature and empirical studies.

2.3 Knowing Spirituality

2.3.1 The increased popularity of spirituality within professional practice

The previous section explored: the spiritual roots of youth work; a definition, values, ethics, and principles that underpin youth work practice; the current state of the sector. This section will now move to the phenomenon of spirituality. It will focus on definitions of spirituality that are relevant to the youth sector, followed by looking at the importance of spirituality within society today, and then spirituality and the helping professions.

2.3.1.1 Spirituality and religion debates

Before looking to define spirituality, it is important to make clear the assumption underpinning this research is that spirituality is not necessarily the same as religion (Adams, Hyde, and Woolley 2008). The concept that religion equates to bad and spirituality to good is seen as naïve (Moss 2005). Many take spirituality to be different to religion (Moss 2005, Hay and Nye 2006), but others believe it is a central component to it (Schreurs 2001). Others consider all forms of spirituality outside of religion as "new-age" which is thought of as inaccurate (Tacey 2001; Tacey 2016. The debate about the relationship between spirituality and religion is long held and before examining the definitions of spirituality it is worth exploring some of the sociology of religion (Fenn 2003).

In considering definitions of religion, there are three sociological perspectives that can help set the background: Marx; Durkheim; and Weber. Marx's perspective that religion is an "opium of the people" indicated it was like a drug that numbs the pain produced by human exploitation and oppression. As an atheist in the 1800s, Marx believed religion was said to create a dream world rather than true happiness (Marx and Engels 1848). An alternative perspective on religion is the functionalist perspective where the focus is that religion contributes to social cohesion (Durkheim 1912/2001). However, the functionalist perspective on religion draws attention to the positive impact of religion and fails to recognise the troubling elements such as division between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, and Muslims and Hindus in India (Holborn and Langley 2002). Finally, in the early 1900s Weber (2014) proposed a reversal of the Marxist perspective that problems in society are mirrored in religion. Weber postulated social capitalism originated from the religious traditions of prosperity, where wealth and religion, once enemies, were now being seen as allies (Weber 2014).

Over the last twenty years the phrase “Spiritual but not religious” (Zinnbauer et al. 1997) is gaining credence. This has since been examined in USA by the Pew Research Center (Wormald 2015), who found those identifying as spiritual, and not religious represented nearly 20% of the population. Pew Research conducted further research in 2017 and found this was on the rise with over 27% of adults claiming to be “Spiritual but not religious” (Lipka and Gecewicz 2017). Spirituality was about the individual, their well-being and own journey, whereas religion was about the community or the organisation (Carrette and King 2005). In this thesis it is worth noting the relationship between the individual, the collective and organisations; the assumption is spirituality is in the relationship and therefore in community (Hay and Nye 2006) rather than being an isolated experiential phenomenon.

2.3.1.2 Acknowledging the Western location of the research

This study is located in a western-centric notion of spirituality (Tacey 2004) primarily focused on UK-based empirical research. The literature search was expanded to include research from the USA and then Australia, to incorporate significant research studies aligned with these research aims and objectives. My own experience of spirituality is also rooted in Christianity in England. The spirituality of the western is often described as individualistic (Hay 2007), so situating it within a social language of community. Tacey (2004) appeals to make sure it does not become “another word for narcissism, fanaticism or self-aggrandisement” (Tacey 2004: 29). This individualised Western notion of spirituality can be described as having some limitations and the more community-centred spirituality of the East is explored in more depth by Hay (2007) as he acknowledges that even when talking about the individual in Japan, the underpinning concept is the “me-group” rather than the first person “I”.

> “The pattern of modern Western assumptions has created an overlay that perhaps obscures, suppresses and in some cases represses the natural spirituality of the human species. It turns spirituality from something explicitly reflected upon, and therefore potent within political and social life, into something implicit and vague, disconnected from the mainstream of human activity.”
>
> (Hay and Nye 2006: 32)

Incorporating more fully Eastern definitions of spirituality in future research might bring a different perspective within the youth work context. As Cooper (2016) examined the effects of colonialism on privileging a Western Christian spirituality it challenged us to consider the effects of absenting the Eastern theories. As spirituality rises in popularity,

Eastern spirituality, such as Buddhism, brings the influence of meditation and mindfulness (Kabat Zinn 2013; Puddicombe 2012) into the Western world. In comparing Eastern and Western religions, such as Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Christianity, the Eastern religions believe in multiple Gods, perceive death as resulting in reincarnation, and in many ways are more religious than the growing secularity in the West (Hay 2007). This comparison between religions is useful to be aware of, but in this research the definitions around spirituality have been purposefully detached from religion and in the recruitment of participants the emphasis has been on those without a specific religious affiliation. In this IPA research (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) the approach was to focus on the experiences of the individual youth workers. So, although definitions of spirituality are included here that draw on relationships (Hyde 2008; Hay and Nye 2006), the basis in this research is exploring the participants' views of what spirituality means for them.

Spirituality has increased in popularity over the last few decades (Rowson 2017) with a broader professional context trying to define and understand how spirituality can fit within practice. Human service practitioners (Moss 2005), counsellors and psychotherapists (Mueller 2013; Schreurs 2001 West 2004), social workers (Barker and Floersch 2010; Holloway and Moss 2010), nurses (Carey, Mathieson, and Koenig 2018; Greenstreet 2017; Robinson 2008), teachers (Gillespie 2017; Ota and Chater 2007; Rawle 2009; Wright 2000), and psychologists (Seligman 2004) are some examples of recent research within professional contexts.

Key children and young people's policies such as the Children Act (DCSF 2004), ECM (DfES 2003) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989) do not refer to spirituality explicitly (Watson 2006). But spiritual development is on the agenda for education (Ofsted 2019), and the policies mentioned above arguably provide a holistic view of children's well-being and the value of the voice of children that gives room for spiritual dimensions. Spirituality is on the agenda in many contexts, secular and religious, national, and international (Gledhill 2009) but the current UK situation is driven by an economic crisis (Bell and Blanchflower 2011) and now latterly the move towards BREXIT. It begs the question, 'Do people have time and space to consider spirituality?' or, conversely, 'Might the societal crises encourage more people in the direction of searching for meaning and purpose to their lives?' (Tacey 2004).

2.3.1.3 Tensions and issues for practitioners

The diversity of definitions about spirituality can cause some issues and tensions for practitioners in the helping professions. For youth workers it is important to consider the impact this may have on practice, as they seek to incorporate an anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive approach to working with young people around spirituality (Robinson 2008; Thompson 2006)

In contrast to the popular view of the positive benefit of spirituality, it is essential to consider the negative impact it may have on some people. The concept that spirituality has a "darker side" (Holloway and Moss 2010) has implications for practitioners beginning to consider spirituality. Such contexts youth workers may see spirituality and religion impacting upon include abuse in religious contexts (Crisp 2007), child abuse (Furness and Gilligan 2010; Gilligan and Akhtar 2006) and gay conversion therapy (Beeching 2018). This research considers spirituality and religion as “creative, generous and awesome, but at the same time, they can be destructive, oppressive and awful.” (Holloway and Moss 2010: 36).

It is important to address how spirituality and professional ethics intertwine, as Robinson (2008) identifies within the caring professions. He presents three case studies that show some of the practice tensions: the problem of belief in therapy; abuse in the context of a belief structure, e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses and the impact of their religion on blood transfusions; and finally, same-sex activity, faith, and mental health. Robinson (2008) stipulates practitioners should be aware of the harmful effects of spirituality and to be prepared to challenge it. In the text *Religion, Belief and Social Work,* Furness, and Gilligan (2010), identify areas of concern including the link between religion and child abuse, including male infant circumcision and the concept of Jinn and witchcraft with children. They address the case of Victoria Climbié, where Lord Laming’s (2003) investigation found belief in spirit possessions played a significant role in Victoria’s abuse and ultimate death (Moss 2005). The Climbié inquiry led to stronger multi-disciplinary working and clearer communication amongst professionals around safe-guarding and child protection.

Besides spiritual belief, religion can have a negative impact on people with the case against religion, including the role of women, human sexuality, and abuse (Moss 2005). Crisp (2007, 2010) examines abuse within religious settings and found victims are often

silenced about their abuse. Keeping the victim isolated means they missed support from others. In Crisp's (2007, 2010) examples, the perpetrators were ministers of religion and family members. In the pressure to remain silent the perpetrator drew in God as a co-conspirator. Similarly, Kennedy (2003) found in research with female Christian survivors of abuse, that they felt not only betrayed by the human, but "betrayed by an all-powerful deity" (Furness and Gilligan 2010: 88). In these examples, the negative spiritual impact on the survivor also undermines their spiritual health and recovery. Further still Crisp (2010) identifies victims were encouraged to forgive their perpetrators, and then continue to remain silent about the abuse. When working with young people in relation to their own spiritual development it is important to consider it may trigger recollection of hidden abuse or may uncover other historic spiritual beliefs. In this research, it is crucial to keep in mind the negative impact spirituality, or religion, has for some people.

2.3.2 Spirituality in Youth Work

In the early 2000s, there was a burgeoning of research about spirituality and youth work (Bullock and Pimlott 2008; Green 2006; Nemko 2006). But as the youth work sector has struggled to survive, understandably, the priority for research is about the impact, or value, of youth work itself (Davies 2011; McNeil 2019; Mundy-McPherson, Fouché and Elliot 2012) and has overshadowed the study of spirituality within youth work.

2.3.2.1 A journey of discovery (Green 2006)

The initial search for a definition of spirituality, within a youth work context, found Green's (2006) book *A journey of discovery.* Commissioned by the National Youth Agency (NYA) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), it was to be a resource to support youth workers to address spiritual development in their practice as prescribed by the National Occupational Standards 1.1.4 (LLUK 2008). Green (2006) established:

> it has been virtually impossible to come up with an absolute, clean definition of spirituality which can be used in every circumstance. However, it is also apparent that "spirituality" can have a place as a very useful shorthand to refer to this particular dimension which is an essential part of our true humanity.
>
> (Green 2006: 17)

With the assumption spirituality is an "essential part of our true humanity" (Green 2006: 17), the value of exploring spiritually with young people would be as important as addressing their physical, emotional, and mental needs (Hardy and Ebstyne-King 2019).

The commission of Green's (2006) study and the surrounding work at that time (Bullock and Pimlott 2008; Green 2008; Nash and Pimlott 2010; Nemko 2006) indicated a desire to equip youth workers with support about how to address spirituality. In response to the introduction of spiritual development to the National Occupational Standards (LLUK 2008), the introduction of which came about in reaction to faith-based youth work training providers wanting spirituality included within the remit of their youth workers' training standards (Daughtry 2012). It saw an increase of interest in religious youth workers in Christian (Bullock and Pimlott 2008; Nash 2012), Jewish (Marsh 2006) and with Muslim youth work (Khan 2006). However, the introduction meant that secular youth workers could address spirituality with young people, though many were unsure of where to start.

Nurden (in Jeffs and Smith 2010) describes faith-based youth work from a Christian context mostly but stipulates the importance of universal spiritual development. He explores the history and something of the current state. And warns: "while it may be tempting to separate 'faith-based' and 'secular', the value of doing so may be questioned." (Nurden, in Jeffs and Smith 2010: 131). Being directed at faith-based youth workers and how to incorporate spirituality into practice, it seems to be validating their voice within the broader field of youth work. Nurden does not speak to "secular" (as he calls them) youth workers engaging with spirituality. This research is keen to assert the place of spirituality within all forms of youth work.

2.3.2.2 The Durham Accord (Daughtry et al. 2012)

In 2012 a group of youth work academics from the UK and Australia (including Green and Daughtry) gathered to begin to engage with the place of spirituality and youth work again after Green's (2006) initial work. The Durham Accord (Daughtry et al. 2012) identified a definition of spirituality within youth work:

> - Development of people's understanding of meaning and purpose within life.
> - Cultivation of an inner life and engagement with the world that is characterised by compassion; wonder; gratitude; the struggle for justice, reconciliation, peace-making and right living.
> - Sense of the sacred and the importance of connecting in a relational and respectful way to ourselves, to others, to the environment and, for many, also to the transcendent.
>
> (Daughtry et al. 2012)

They went on to consider spirituality within a secular context and identified what this would encompass.

> Spirituality may also be recognised and described in various aspects of secular life and traditions, with particular reference to the capacity to reflect with meaning on the relationship with the self, others, society, and the environment, and on the various joys, hopes, successes and fulfilment of life, as well as in regard to challenges, losses, disappointments, and failures.
>
> (Daughtry et al. 2012)

Within the Durham Accord there was an expectation spirituality would need to be considered by youth workers, training providers.

> Reflective practice in all work with young people will be enriched by acknowledging that spiritual development (understood in a broad and inclusive way such as this) is a foundational and underpinning concept for all work with young people. It should not be considered an appended optional extra that is only considered important to those working within particular settings or within particular belief frameworks.
>
> (Daughtry et al. 2012)

The international literature (in the USA and Australia) focusing on youth work spirituality addresses Positive Youth Development and spirituality (Alberts, Warren, Lerner, and Phelps 2012; James and Ward 2019; Shek 2012), the need to integrate spiritual development into youth worker training (Kimball 2008), and the edited collection *Spirituality for youth work* from Daughtry and Devenish (2016). In England, there was a lack of discussion of spirituality within youth work. Consequently, the next section draws on other parallel professional fields that work with young people and, like youth work, have a remit to address spirituality to widen the youth work knowledge by establishing a definition of youth work.

2.3.3 Defining spirituality in parallel professions

In counselling, West (2004) found it is hard to define spirituality and identifies “three special difficulties…1 - what spirituality is; 2 - how we might capture a spiritual experience; 3 - the idea that some people deny its existence.” (West 2004: 116) He argued the diversity of what spirituality is for an individual is part of the issue with defining it. The phenomenon of spirituality defined by multiple sources dating back thousands of years means it is hard to capture. Similarly, the concept that a spiritual experience may happen when you would perhaps be in another “state of consciousness” may mean trying to capture that experience might be like trying to “hold water” in your hands. West (2004)

does, however, conclude for spirituality to have such a priority in so many lives, it is worthy of study. “If David Hay's (Hay and Hunt: 2000) latest survey is accepted, then 76 per cent of the population have had spiritual experiences, which suggests that these are in fact the norm” (West 2004: 117).

This finding is at odds with the amount of empirical research around spirituality and adolescents with less than “2 per cent of scientific publications on adolescents address spiritual development” (Benson and Roehlekepartain 2008: 13). Historically, even organisations with spiritual roots found difficulty writing about spirituality for fear that it would not be used in its “fullest and widest” (YMCA 1987: 1) sense. A YMCA workbook on spiritual development made the conscious choice not to use the term *spirituality* (YMCA 1987); this may cause problems for researchers. Green’s (2006) language of spirituality is less constrained. It opened up the dialogue about spiritual development in youth work, but for youth workers to be clear about what spiritual development means in a secular youth work context more research, case studies, and models of best practice need to be collected.

The lack of a definition of spirituality created difficulties for youth workers as to how professionally they understand how to support young people’s spirituality as initially encouraged in the National Occupational standards for youth work (LLUK 2008). For those from faith-based youth work, or in a religious context, the definition of spirituality can still be diverse, but places some, helpful, boundaries on spirituality. From an atheistic perspective, Watson (2017) calls for clarity on definitions of spirituality and recognition spirituality is still relevant in the policy context of ECM and beyond calls for continued investigations around the subject of spirituality. Within my thesis, I wanted to hear the voice of the youth workers as they explored spirituality in a youth work context and their way of understanding their spirituality and its impact on practice. The nature of spirituality means youth workers and young people could benefit from beginning this exploration from where they are at and grappling with spiritual issues themselves before thinking about their professional engagement with spirituality.

Moss (2005) offers a definition of spirituality with human services practitioners in mind. He says, “spirituality may be defined for our purposes as what we do to give expression to our chosen world view.” (Moss 2005: 13) This is an embracing definition of spirituality that includes different religions and is accessible for agnostics or atheists. Speaking

about spirituality may not even be something many people have given much thought to. However, talking about how people view the world or how they make sense of the world may be more accessible. In their research with young people and young adults in Australia, Singleton, Mason, and Webber define spirituality as “a conscious way of life - based on a transcendent referent” (Singleton, Mason, and Webber 2004: 250). They explain “way of life” to mean world view (similar to Moss 2005) and transcendent meaning a “reality which is beyond the individual” (Singleton, Mason, and Webber 2004: 251). This study of Generation Y spirituality took spirituality to be a part of a religion or involving following an ideal not attached to a religion. The medical research by Koenig, King and Carson (2012), is experimental and uses scales to measure opinion; this quantitative method is different from my research. Koenig, King and Carson’s (2012) standpoint opposes Singleton, Mason, and Webber’s (2004) findings, saying spirituality should be situated within religions and should be focused on the transcendental aspects, the belief in God or other. Otherwise, the lack of a clear definition of spirituality makes it challenging to measure in research and could be mental well-being rather than spirituality. It is difficult to know whether spirituality is the source or the outcome of psychological well-being.

As Holloway and Moss (2010) do for Social Workers, there is a call for youth workers to consider spirituality within the profession's value base. In the anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive approach (Banks 2010; Thompson 2006) there is a recognition of the dark side to spirituality. Not all spirituality is 'benign'; religious adherence may have oppressive or destructive consequences for the individual or community, and there is light and dark to every spiritual journey (Holloway and Moss 2010). “Against this backcloth it is easy to see how issues of religion and spirituality have at very least been ignored on many training syllabuses and have been seen by practitioners across a wide spectrum as being irrelevant, pathological or even dangerous” (Moss 2005: 22).

With their research on young people, Carrette and King (2005) argue definitions exist purely to serve as research boundaries, illustrated here by Singleton, Mason and Webber (2004). They recognise the surge of popularity towards the spiritual but “there is no essence or definitive meaning to terms like spirituality and religion” (Carrette and King 2005: 3), and to define spirituality would not do justice to the numbers of different meanings it has had over time. Carrette and King (2005) suggest, instead, we look at the fruits of practices labelled spiritual rather than its roots or origins.

2.3.3.1 Empirical research about spirituality within helping professions

Within parallel professions, several studies were found that spoke with professionals about their spirituality, in ways similar to the hopes of my research: particularly relevant work in the field of education (De Souza 2003; Gillespie 2017; Marshall 2009), social work (Cheon and Canda 2010; Furman et al. 2005; Senreich 2012), nursing (Reinert and Koenig 2013), counselling (Carroll 2001), occupational therapy (Taylor et al. 2000), and in multidisciplinary contexts (Oxhandler and Parrish 2018). Within each of the professions indicated there is a recognition of the need to address the spirituality of clients, service users, or patients and acknowledge the whole person when working with them.

2.3.3.2 Educational research

Within educational research, the practitioner's spirituality was explored and how it was expressed in the workplace using IPA (Gillespie 2017). The concept of spiritual motivations to begin work as a teacher was explored by Marshall (2009), although this was within a Catholic university rather than with secular teachers. Marshall was trying to understand the reasons teachers stay or quit their jobs and concluded further research was needed to explore the meaning and purpose qualitatively teachers find in their work and how that impacts on their retention within the profession.

2.3.3.3 Social Work and Spirituality

Cheon and Canda (2010) claimed research around social work and spirituality discussions were based around adult's spirituality so research refocused on “spirituality-based helping practices that may apply to working with youth” (2010: 121). Furman et al. (2005) had a comparative study with UK and US social workers around spirituality within social work, finding UK social workers were less accepting of religion and spirituality than the USA social workers. Following the secularization of the profession especially in the UK; there was a positive outcome of 90% of USA social workers wanting to increase their knowledge of spirituality and only 57% of UK social workers. Both felt a lack of training in the initial qualifying stages needed addressing. The key debate in spirituality is often around seeking a definition to provide clarity, boundaries, and to support practitioners, but this remains elusive in many professions including those with a more scientific framework such as in nursing research (Reinert and Koenig 2013).

2.3.3.4 Comparison across professions

Oxhandler and Parrish's (2018) work interviewed across five different professions (Social work, Psychologists, counsellors, marriage and family therapists and nurses). It attempted to draw on their experiences of integrating client's religion/spirituality in clinical practice. As with others, this proved a challenge. The professional bodies and associations who addressed religion or spirituality integration in practice at a higher-level showed those workers were more confident in integrating this within practice, particularly counsellors. However, this research was conducted in the USA, and as Furman et al. (2005) found, the UK was more resistant to the concept of spirituality.

2.3.3.5 Dealing with the diversity of definitions

To help professionals incorporate spirituality into their work they must begin to examine the diversity of spiritual expression for the individuals they work with. Inevitably this may cause the practitioners ethical tensions (Furness and Gilligan 2010), reveal spiritual practices that may be harmful to others (Crisp 2013) and in looking at spirituality may "make us feel inadequate about our own" (Nye 2009: 20). Furness and Gilligan (2010) recognise the need for practitioners to have a "safe context" (2010: 158) to explore these ethical dilemmas and challenges posed by working with people who may hold spiritual views that exclude others or represent extreme perspectives. This is especially important in the context of many professionals' value base of acceptance, non-judgement (Furness and Gilligan 2010) and anti-discrimination (Thompson 2012).

2.3.4 Spirituality definitions for this research

Similarly, atheistic spirituality researcher Watson (2017) made a passionate call to academia, who write for professional practice, to stop saying that spirituality was hard to define or difficult to pin down. She argued, instead, that it was diverse and different for everyone, but we must move beyond this to work on developing spirituality with children, young people, and adults. The definition needed to:

> embrace and describe this diversity through a broad account of this post-secular spiritual territory. "Spirituality" also signals certain key values which we appear to share across disciplines.
>
> 1. Spiritual diversity and inclusivity.
> 2. Human rights and the right to a spiritual voice.
> 3. A critique of market-driven performativity and a focus on the whole child (and person).

4. Spiritual practice.

(Watson 2017: 12)

Drawing on the spirituality definitions from youth work and parallel professions, it is important to recognise the value of researching spirituality. Watson (2017) indicated spirituality is a challenge to define, but this challenge did not minimise the value or importance of researching spirituality.

In the field of S*ociology of Religion*, Wuthnow (2003) examined the reasons why spiritual practice should be researched. He concluded that although some critics might argue contemporary spiritual practices are "often superficial, because people expect instant gratification" (Wuthnow 2003: 308) and may appear narcissistic if not pursued in the context of communities and traditions, spirituality continues to attract widespread attention from religious people and members of the helping professions. "Studies of spiritual practice are needed both to sort out its varieties and to understand how it is shaped by the culture." (Wuthnow 2003: 311).

For young people, the value of researching spirituality is captured by Hay and Nye (2006) who indicated spirituality has a political and social importance; When people link their own spirituality with a moral imperative, they have more desire to care for others and they have a clearer understanding of their life's purpose. Hay and Nye (2006) recognised "the extreme individualism of modern Western society is an illusion" (2006: 30) and "spirituality underpins ethical behaviour and encourages social cohesion" (2006: 30).

2.3.4.1 The four-domains of spiritual well-being (SWB)

The four-domain model of spirituality (Fisher 1998; Fisher 2004; Fisher 2011) identifies spiritual health is reflected in the:

> quality of relationships that people have in up to four domains of spiritual well-being: personal domain where the person intra-relates with self; communal domain, with in-depth interpersonal relationships; environmental domain, connecting with nature; transcendental domain, relating to some-thing or some-One beyond the human level.
>
> (Fisher 2011: 1)

The four areas allow for measurable data with participants using the spiritual well-being assessment (Fisher, Francis, and Johnson 2002; Fisher 2009; Fisher 2010) in education with students and teachers. The use of this model has been particularly relevant in my thesis interviews

2.3.4.2 Educational definitions of spirituality

Youth work draws on many educational philosophies around the power of education for social reform and freedom (Dewey 1915; Freire 1972) and the need for reflective practice to develop as practitioners (Schon 1983). The background in educational literature helps frame some of the spiritual values that are drawn upon. As with youth work, education had its tensions within the profession, as it incorporated spirituality into the curriculum and prepared to be subject to Ofsted inspection (Wright 2000). The Ofsted handbook provides definition and guidance to schools which then must demonstrate consistent spiritual development of children over the years. The Ofsted (2004) definition of spirituality is helpful as it attempts to draw together several key concepts.

> The development of the non-material element of a human being which animates and sustains us and, depending on our point of view, either ends or continues in some form when we die. It is about the development of a sense of identity, self-esteem, personal insight, meaning and purpose. It is about the development of a pupils' "spirit." Some people may call it the development of a person's "soul;" others as the development of "personality" or "character."
>
> (Ofsted 2004: 12)

More recently, Ofsted (2019) is expecting schools will have:

> provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their:
>
> ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life
>
> interest in, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings, and values
>
> sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others, and the world around them
>
> use of imagination and creativity in their learning
>
> willingness to reflect on their experiences.
>
> (Ofsted 2019: 40)

This Ofsted definition seems wide enough to encompass most religions as well as those without a religion. Furthermore, are in line with the promotion of British Values within schools, including democracy, tolerance, and acting within the law (DfE 2014). The Ofsted (2004; 2019) definitions encapsulate a spirituality I would align with as an educationalist myself. As informal educators, I believe most youth workers could identify with aspects of this definition. It links to youth work values such as reflective practice, respect for others and creative interest in self and the world. It is written accessibly and,

importantly, schools will mirror this language through the curriculum, meaning children and young people should be conversant with elements of this in their education. The language of spirituality here is common to that about values and ethos already in use within the education and youth work context.

2.3.4.3 Using a life-centred vocabulary

Cupitt (2003) explored the idea spirituality has in the past been seen as a way to look at death and the next life; it is now seen to bring meaning to this life. He argued "*life"* is used excessively in language today and at the heart of this is a change from a "God-centred" to a "life-centred" religious vocabulary. The idea "some youth workers and young people may find the terminology of 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' off-putting or ambiguous" was explored by Mason (2005: 1), on behalf of the British Humanist Association, in his response to the consultation paper preceding Green (2006). The critical work of Hay and Nye on children's spirituality affirmed this by arguing children use abstract language when talking about spirituality due to a "culturally constructed taboo against the expression of spirituality" (Hay and Nye, 2006: 133). While my research will continue using the term spirituality, even if it appears challenging to take hold of, I will bear in mind the addition of "life" terminology as I interview the youth workers, for those who struggle with the concept of spirituality.

2.3.4.4 Purpose in career - Ikigai

In considering Cupitt's (2003) life terminology, for many youth workers the career brings a sense of purpose and job satisfaction. The Japanese concept of "Ikigai" meaning "life to be worthwhile" (Garcia and Miralles 2017: 11) or our "reason for being", could be useful to examine spiritual concepts such as life purpose and job satisfaction, applied to youth workers. The idea youth work is a lifelong career that many are extremely passionate about (Anderson-Nathe 2010; IDYW 2012; Krueger 2005) is interesting to consider against the backdrop of sector-wide cuts (UNISON 2014). In the study of *The Japanese secret to a long and happy life,* having your Ikigai is important in bringing purpose. Interestingly considering retirement, "having a purpose in life is so important in Japanese culture that our idea of retirement simply doesn't exist there." (Garcia and Miralles 2017: 10).

2.3.5 In Summary

I have chosen to use the term “spirituality” in my research, and I aim to refer to it in its broadest sense. Coles (1992) “atheistic spirituality” and “life spirituality” (Cupitt 2003) capture that sense of what spirituality looks like for people in their everyday lives. For some people, this may be a conscious, mindful or awareness, approach to spirituality, and for others, this may become more focused throughout the interview conversations. My research looked at issues relating to the Ofsted (2004, 2019) definitions, including making sense of life (Cupitt 2003). When talking about how religion relates to spirituality, Moss explains that religions versus spirituality does not exist in his definition and suggests it to be “naive to indicate that religion equates to bad and spirituality to good” (Moss 2005: 99).

Many writers have taken spirituality to be different from religion, albeit related to it (Hay and Nye 2006; Moss 2005); this is the stance I will be taking in my research. Hay and Nye (2006) identify that many spirituality researchers are from a Christian background, as I am myself. This can often get in the way of asking truly spiritual, rather than Christian, questions of interviewees. Hay and Nye (2006) go on to say:

> this kind of limitation is in danger of distorting the accuracy of the findings very seriously... The spirituality of most people is liable to be overlooked.
>
> (Hay and Nye 2006: 50)

Consequently, as Hay and Nye (2006) attempted to do, I will aim to set aside my Christian preconceptions of spirituality. The interview process within Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) encourages the use of minimal questions and allows the participants to follow their flow and ideas (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009); this will help with the possible data collection bias. The data analysis bias will be addressed using the rigorous IPA process, engaging in a series of bracketing interviews as discussed in the methodology chapter, and working with my supervisory team to look out for bias during the writing stages. However, as the researcher, my reflective freewriting and bracketing interviews will be interspersed throughout this thesis to capture my voice in a contained manner.

2.4 Knowing Young People

2.4.1 Young people living in an uncertain society

As politics and society fail to bring meaning and hope, a spiritual revolution has been growing; spirituality may be a means to live well through uncertainty (Tacey 2004). Oft linked to spirituality, a sense of mystery and wonder is a positive, yet opposing, side of uncertainty and change. The individual's quest for meaning may be spiritual but not necessarily attached to a particular religion (Green and Christian 1998). Already a deep routed issue (Furlong et al. 2018) young people's employment outlook was dramatically affected by the recession, with the rising unemployment levels likely to have "lasting scars" on young people (Summers 2009); the issues continue as Brexit loomed and employment, housing, and opportunity for education seem to be out of reach for many.

Bauman (2007) explains it is no longer easy to have *long term life strategies* as *social forms* or institutions "no longer keep their shape long", but instead they "decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them" (Bauman 2007: 1). In comparison to society, West (2004) depicts the ability to capture experiences of spirituality as similar to *holding water* – particularly hard to contain and define. This fluidity within society (Bauman 2007) and spirituality can be unsettling for many. Still, the experience of grappling with meaning, purpose, identity and finding a place in the world can be a useful guide for young people facing uncertain times. The skills needed to adapt and change to situations and circumstances beyond our control may need to be housed in a spiritual attitude, allowing us to shake off a former structure that may now be obsolete. Here I will briefly touch on the 3rd circle of *Knowing Young People* concerning spirituality taking into account the contextual considerations for young people at this time in history.

2.4.1.1 Being in charge of your inner life - The Captain of your soul

At the start of the financial crisis, The Children's Society *A Good Childhood* (Layard and Dunn 2009) was published. It identified young people feel stress from the money problems their parents face, but then went on to highlight a need for uplifting experiences to help balance this stress. Those uplifting experiences were described twofold. Firstly, to feel as though you belong to something bigger than yourself which can give meaning to your small existence and could be anything that takes you out of yourself: art, drama, music, and dance. Secondly, the idea you oversee your inner life, the "captain of your soul," and things can be all right inside you, whatever happens on the outside. This second concept is relevant to youth work in that it is often the inner working of young

people that youth workers are aiming to support – emotions, resilience, identity, and behaviours (Young 2006). The spiritual development of young people could be seen to fit within this concept, especially in the light of the ongoing years of austerity from 2009.

2.4.2 Spirituality with Young People – Empirical Research

The idea youth workers should address the spiritual development of young people needs first to be contextualised against the research around the spirituality of young people themselves, as in the 3rd circle of the Venn diagram.

In examining the psychological development of spirituality, Culliford states "spiritual development begins in childhood hence the relevance to educators and youth workers" (2011: 199) In initial scoping of research with young people and spirituality (Coles 1992; Collins-Mayo et al. 2010; Erricker in Grimmitt 2000; Francis and Robbins 2005; Hay and Nye 2006; Hyde 2008; McCreery in Best 1996; Savage et al. 2006; Singleton, Mason, and Webber 2004) three fundamental studies that address young people's spirituality were of note. The findings and methodology of Coles (1992), Hay and Nye (2006) and Francis and Robbins' (2005) are discussed and will help determine conclusions that apply to this research with youth workers.

2.4.2.1 The Spiritual Life of Children

Coles (1992) work entitled *The Spiritual Life of Children*, conducted over 30 years, is aspirational as a qualitative, interview-based, longitudinal exploration into the spirituality of children. Through months of being with groups of children and young people from diverse cultures and backgrounds Coles captures the spiritual experiences through their own words. Although hard to consider replicating as a novice researcher (Ratcliff and Nye 2006), the thematic presentation of experiences captured the idiographic nature of the children. However, the theoretical discussion and conclusions are lacking such that a theory or new concept of spirituality is not shared. The research exemplifies the world of the children's spiritual lives without generalisability or recommendations about ways forward for researchers or practitioners.

2.4.2.2 The Spirit of the Child

Hay and Nye's (2006), *The Spirit of the Child* is seen as seminal work (Hyde 2008), exploring spirituality with children aged between 7 and 10 years old. This book captures the many vital questions for a novice researcher to consider when they plan to interview

children: how do you research something as ambiguous and ill-defined as spirituality? How do you talk about spirituality to children? What will they say and what about all the tangents they will go off on? As the children are interviewed Hay and Nye (2006) discover the concept of “Relational Consciousness” – “relational” in how we connect with each other, the world or God and “consciousness” looking at our awareness of that - which is recognised as a valuable contribution to the field (Adams, Hyde, and Woolley 2008). Unlike Coles (1992), this research is very much grounded in theory, methodology and interpretations of what the children said to bring about recommendations.

In the tradition of Hay and Nye (2006), Hyde (2008) conducts research interviewing children, and he identifies four characteristics of spirituality (felt sense, integrating awareness, threads of meaning and spiritual questing). The four characteristics remain outside of a religious setting and are themes that seem theoretically based rather than created from the words of the children. Hyde's (2008) terminology and language are not immediately easy to comprehend without further study and may add to the confusion about what spirituality is. It would be an accessible research value to hold that the research participants should understand the very concepts they were interviewed about, applicable to them and academics researching in the field.

2.4.2.3 Urban Hope and Spiritual Health: The Adolescent Voice

Francis and Robbins (2005) conducted large scale quantitative research with over 35,000 young people completing questionnaires about spirituality. However, the title of the book, *Urban Hope and Spiritual Health: The Adolescent Voice,* is incongruent with the findings; the quantitative analysis does not capture the individual voice of the young people, but the collective “voice” of 35,000 young people. Whereas the concept of a small piece of qualitative research that captures the voice of participants and allows for the individual to come through was crucial for my research. Francis and Robbins (2005) found four indicators of spirituality: relationships to one-self; relationships to others; relationships to the environment; relationships to something bigger, possibly a god. The concept of exploring spirituality through this lens with youth workers is helpful as it is a UK, youth-based study.

2.4.3 Methodological implications

2.4.3.1 Insider research around spirituality

As an insider researcher exploring youth work and spirituality with participants who I know, the comparison is stark as the researchers in these key studies were “outsiders” (McNiff and Whitehead 2011). With the possible exception of Coles (1992), who may have been able to make the transition to insider due to the length of time he spent with each research group. Hay and Nye (2006) and Francis and Robbins (2005) come to this research as researchers, whereas I am embracing the fusion of researcher and practitioner. While not a limitation of the other studies, it does have implications, beneficial and limiting, for my research, as explored within the methodology chapter.

Considering the notion of “insider” research, Rankin's (2005) youth work research conducted with young people around spirituality is of note. He had detached-based dialogues with 211 young people in detached youth work settings about their spirituality; in meeting the young people where they are at (Whelan 2010) he gathered their perspectives on their spirituality. He summarised the dialogues for analysis and provided recommendations for schools and youth workers, giving them space to talk about this with professionals.

2.4.3.2 Quantitative or Qualitative research with young people?

Summarising some of the other research with young people about their spirituality, there are a few quantitative studies capturing thousands of young people’s views about spirituality, but not emphasising the individual voice (Francis and Robbins 2005; Robinson and Jackson 1987). The transition from quantitative to qualitative proved problematic for Robinson and Jackson (1987) who found, as they hoped to interview young people and elicit spontaneous accounts of personal spirituality and religious experience (Paffard’s model), that they were unable or unwilling to talk about it. They then transitioned to quantitative research but in analysis, with such a large sample of 6,500 young people from schools and church youth groups, and the range of academic attainment, the results from different centres were incomparable.

2.4.3.3 The value of capturing young people’s voice for youth work practice.

There was a collection of research around the young people of Generation Y’s faith and spirituality in the UK and Australia with qualitative research including semi-structured

interviews, observations and focus groups about young people's faith coming from a Christian perspective (Collins-Mayo et al. 2010; Savage et al. 2006); and research with young Australians (Mason, Singleton, and Webber 2007; Singleton, Mason, and Webber 2004) about the spirit of Generation Y indicating:

> their involvement with traditional religions was declining, like that of their parents, and although some adopted alternative spiritualities, the stronger trends were towards indifference or humanism. Eclecticism in worldviews and cautiously relativistic values seem to be responses to an uncertain world, in which isolated individuals have only fragile support structures for their identities.
>
> (Mason, Singleton, and Webber 2007: 150)

The research with young people helped to build a basis as to why youth workers should be bothered about the spiritual development of young people, and in the main (aside from Robinson and Jackson 1987) the findings indicated young people are interested in talking about personal spirituality or faith. Recommendations that provide listening and support for young people are prevalent. Exploring what spirituality looked like for young people, leads to a call for another piece of research to capture how youth workers understand what spiritual development looked like for young people.

2.4.4 In summary

In terms of this research with youth workers and spirituality, Coles (1992) has encouraged me to conduct longitudinal research within the scope and limitations of a time-bound PhD of 18 months of data collection. Francis and Robbins (2005) have unintentionally stirred me to ensure my research represents the youth workers' voice, using qualitative interviewing techniques. Hay and Nye (2006) have inspired me to conduct interviews specifically around spirituality allowing research questions big enough to give space for the participants to answer and explore their own experiences of spirituality. With the expectation, the participants might be able to fluently engage with a topic they may be unfamiliar with, in the same way that the children did in Hay and Nye's research. In terms of UK based empirical research with children and young people around spirituality, this indicated their willingness to engage with spirituality. Rankin (2005) suggested supporting young people to develop spirituality, and there should be the provision of youth workers who can use conversation and other informal education techniques. This can build relationships and facilitate spiritual conversations of meaning, purpose, existential questions, and identity, as well as beliefs and values explorations.

2.5 Youth worker's spirituality

Following on from the current youth work landscape and examination of the definitions of spirituality with children and young people, this section examines the research with youth workers about spirituality – referring to the Venn diagram this is the intersection between Circle 1 *Knowing Youth Work* and Circle 2 *Knowing Spirituality*. The intersection – *Knowing Youth Workers' spirituality* will focus on research that draws on the voice of the participants, acknowledging the methodology and methods used and the relevant findings, implications, and limitations. It will identify themes in considering the research question, 'Does spirituality impact on youth work practice?'. Following exploring the previous empirical research with youth workers around spirituality, a gap for my research will be identified, drawing together the full literature review. The next section unpacks the findings from these studies relevant to this thesis.

2.5.1 Empirical research with youth workers about spirituality

2.5.1.1 The Search Institute research from the USA

The Search Institute began their research with youth workers around their practice, and spirituality in 1995 (Scales et al. 1995) by gathering research on the attitudes and needs of religious youth workers. This found religious youth workers who were a mix of full time/part time, paid/volunteer, genders, length of service and mainstream protestant, were keen to receive training in positive youth development. They identified this as a gap in their training and saw it was well aligned with their faith-based youth work. Two key obstacles to this were around cross-faith training that may compromise their own beliefs, and the time to take part in the training itself. This survey, that reached 527 youth workers was the largest of its kind to ask religious youth workers about their needs. The impact of this meant that future research, some from within the original Scales et al. team (1995) (Roehlekepartain for example) was able to be conducted on the assumption that religious youth workers want PYD training.

In 2007, the Search Institute published a report on the common ground between faith-based and community-based youth workers. It recognised these two groups of youth workers "appear to operate in parallel universes" (Garza, Artman, and Roehlekepartain 2007: 9). The survey of 1322 youth workers focus on ranking the Youth Development Worker Competences' importance to their work as "not important, somewhat important, very important and essential" (2007: 15). Across the two groups the greatest difference was the competence *helping young people develop spiritually*, with only 14% of

community-based youth workers saying this was essential to their work compared with 77% of faith-based youth worker. “Thus faith-based youth workers are more than five times as likely as community-based workers to say that cultivating spiritual development is an essential part of their work with young” (Garza, Artman, and Roehlekepartain 2007: 15). This was similar to the findings of Strommen, Jones, and Rahn (2001) who surveyed 2130 youth ministers in 1996 about their hopes and frustrations within their roles, who also identified spiritual development of young people was their “highest priority” (2001: 21).

Interestingly, Garza, Artman, and Roehlekepartain (2007) research found that spiritual development was the one instance where men were more likely than women to view the competency as “essential” to their work, helping young people develop spiritually (30% female versus 42% male). Two recommendations linked to spirituality were given: 1 – to develop a practice tool kit with materials to deliver it and a reading list; 2 – to create a framework for moral and spirituality development).

Following this research, Roehlekepartain (2007) published a summary, and further implications, in *Building bridges for the sake of the Youth;* reiterating community- and faith-based youth workers have much to learn from each other. He goes on to unpick the difference between community-based youth workers who saw spiritual development of young people as the lowest priority and faith-based youth workers who saw it as among the highest priorities. The research team did not define what was meant by spiritual development and Roehlekepartain concluded “it’s likely that many youth workers (in both sectors) equated it with religious formation or, perhaps, religious indoctrination – both of which are off limits to (or viewed negatively by) youth workers in community-based settings.” (2007: 5) However, the Search Institute would assume spiritual development is viewed as a core part of human development that is distinct from, but linked to, religious development or formation. It went on to define it as a “constant, ongoing, and dynamic interplay between one’s inward journey and one’s outward journey” (Search Institute 2019). This allowed new opportunities for conversations that may stretch youth workers in both sectors; it may be that a “shared understanding of spiritual development may emerge from these efforts that would increase the interest in, and comfort with, the issues among community-based youth workers and faith-based youth workers” (Roehlekepartain 2007: 5). This hopeful perspective in developing young people’s spiritually may be an avenue for further study.

The Search Institute research here has taken surveying of youth workers as its main data collection tool, this produces large data sets that are able to be analysed to be reliable and vigorous. Yet, as Green (2015) reminds us, spirituality continues to be held at "arms-length" in terms of qualitative data exploring youth ministers' and youth workers' perspectives on it. However, in terms of the large-scale research this has not yet been replicated in the UK, possibly due to funding of such research – although in some respects the research with young people around spirituality by Francis and Robbins (2005) could be comparable in terms of impact, albeit not with youth workers.

2.5.1.2 UK empirical research

This next section explores the research with youth workers about spirituality within the UK. Unlike the USA research this is qualitative, but the data sets were much smaller. The UK research featured two main studies (McFeeters 2010 and Dallas 2009) which interviewed youth workers about spirituality and spiritual development.

In the case of McFeeters, the research was for a master's dissertation and focused on faith-based youth workers and the role spirituality played in their youth work practice. The study was similar to the findings of the larger studies in the USA with faith-based youth workers, in that it found youth workers were including it in their practice. They saw spirituality to be about "teaching of values, teaching the bibles, experiential learning, personal experiences, search for meaning and purpose and questioning rules, authorities and morals in life" (McFeeters 2010: 80). In addition, some of the participants felt spiritual development would be a useful tool in self-awareness, and the concept of faith and spirituality was closely linked. The research is interesting to consider but needs further analysis and implications for practice. In relation to this thesis the study was focused on faith-based youth workers in Ireland, who should already be conversant in some way with the concept of spirituality; my research focuses on secular or community-based youth workers only.

Dallas' (2009) research with youth workers in North and South of Ireland interviewed faith-based and community-based youth workers, although the final composition of participants was more heavily weighted to faith-based youth workers. The focus was in "three themes: defining spirituality, the purpose of spiritual development and how workers seek to do spiritual development" (Dallas 2009: 2). The interviews were

analysed, and Dallas provided quotes from participants as well as identifying five themes about spiritual development. These are:

> Spiritual development is linked to self-formation and personal and social development
>
> In the context of youth work spiritual development is inclusive
>
> Current youth work values and programme areas cultivate spiritual development
>
> The concept of spiritual development should be included within the training and supervision of youth workers
>
> Ideas about spiritual development are shaped by personal narratives
>
> (Dallas 2009: 9)

The findings are similar to the statement by The Durham Accord (Daughtry et al. 2012) discussed earlier and show the importance of youth workers considering their own spirituality as they focus on developing young people's. It is important to consider this as Green (2015) calls for spirituality to not remain at "arms-length", but that we should consider spirituality of ourselves as practitioners in reflective ways. Dallas (2009) goes on to place importance on the need to nurture self-formation, in his case this is referring to the role a youth worker takes with young people. But it led me to the need for youth workers to consider their own self-formation, practice identities, and spirituality. It could be argued both the USA and Ireland have a national identity more strongly related to spirituality (Dallas 2009), or religion, and so the need for research into this may be stronger than in England.

Dallas (2009) identified the difficulties statutory youth provision not promoting a faith position may face: "because it gives space to creating more dialogue about faith in terms of looking at the world beyond the physical when looking a self-formation" (Dallas 2009: 18). He highlights a quote from a secular youth worker:

> ...the youth service has always sought and felt the responsibility, without manipulating, without indoctrinating, to try and somehow allow an environment where they can help young people to discover and to shape what the future looks like through the generation above them passing on their value base...
>
> (Dallas 2009: 18)

The concept of indoctrinating young people is highlighted as a key consideration of secular youth workers. When Green was asked to do a review around youth work standards with spirituality and youth work for the NYA, there was acknowledgement

some youth work practices could have a negative effect on young people's spiritual lives; with "techniques to convert" being at "odds with the empowerment agenda and abusive to young people" (Green 2006: 31).

Dallas recommends:

> Faith-based and non-faith-based agencies need to develop further thinking on the connection between spiritual development and personal and social development.
>
> Spiritual development will be improved if all dimensions of spiritual development are explored: developing thinking about common humanity, the earth, cultural undercurrents, and the world beyond the physical.
>
> (Dallas 2009: 21)

The youth work profession must become more "comfortable around religion, with youth workers able to question and challenge each other for good practice to emerge and be sustained" (Green 2006: 31).

Dallas (2009) found the secular youth workers talked about the balance of targeted funding in youth work, leaving little space for something like spiritual development, and questioned who might champion this within the statutory sector in Ireland. As with the study in the USA by Garza, Artman and Roehlekepartain (2007) that observed faith-based and community-based youth workers 'appear to operate in parallel universes' (2007 :9), this research by Dallas (2009) indicates as we try to foster inclusive spiritual development, the dialogue must be open and:

> groups without a faith perspective must appreciate that open conversations about the world beyond the physical has something to offer spiritual development. Similarly, faith groups must develop thinking that appreciates all the dimensions of spiritual development and be able to distinguish when the focus is on faith development and when spiritual development.
>
> (Dallas 2009: 31)

The final theme Dallas (2009) found was around "personal narratives" (Dallas 2009: 30) of youth workers and how this shape the spiritual development of young people. The youth workers' personal narratives, impact of their agencies, and statutory policy arose out of his findings. Of the recommendations from Dallas' research this one focuses on the implication for secular and faith-based youth work agencies in considering spirituality:

> Those who enter non-formal and informal youth work from a faith perspective at times struggle to understand how their faith and profession connect. This should be addressed in training and supervision. Agencies need to seek to develop internal thinking about spiritual development.
>
> Agencies that have grown away from religious roots tend to dismiss spiritual development viewing it as religious. This position should be reviewed by such agencies. Statutory policy has had little effect on personal narratives about spiritual development and this is a situation that should be explored in the coming years.
>
> (Dallas 2009: 31)

The implications of this research are that youth workers should consider their own spirituality, and as with Dallas' study, identify how this is happening in their programme areas. It is hoped this thesis will go some way to expand on Dallas' work and further explore the *personal narrative* or, in this case, experiences of spirituality to consider the impact on spiritual development of young people.

2.5.2 What does the youth work literature say bout spirituality?

In the youth work text that aims to *put spirituality on the map* for England, Green (2008) reiterates the importance of including spirituality within youth work.

> "Given that spirituality is part of the youth work curriculum there is a pressing need for youth workers to explore this area of work…. Being able to reflect on one's own spiritual journey and position is hugely important when working with others, In the same way that counsellors need to have been in analysis themselves so that they can identify and manage issues of transference, spiritual work needs to be similarly grounded. A lack of personal reflection on the part of those working within young people is potentially damaging and harmful"
>
> (Green 2008: 66)

For youth workers the assumption here is we have already established the importance of including spirituality within youth work, in response to adolescents and children going through key developmental stages in reference to spirituality (Culliford 2011; Fowler 1981). In the light of the revised National Occupational Standards (CLD 2019) that has removed the requirements to spiritually develop young people (LLUK 2008), it is important to consider the alternative professions engaged with young people (educators) and their focus on spirituality as part of a holistic view of a person.

There is an identified need to move on to equipping youth workers to be prepared to "nurture healthy spiritual development in others" (Kimball 2008: 112). It is suggested youth work training providers would include spirituality within the training of youth workers, as evidenced by Kimball (2008) in an Australian setting. This would be a beneficial inclusion; however, it is worth considering the closure of youth work courses (NYA 2017; Richards and Lewis 2018) and therefore the number of youth workers training. Youth workers who work on their own spirituality post-qualifying, and in some cases, having been in practice for a while, might engage with it through continuing professional development (CPD).

As already identified sometimes the term itself, spirituality, can be problematic, and in youth work Fagg (in Daughtry and Devenish 2016) gives a story of a youth worker who "thought that if she admitted to these religious impulses, her reputation as a youth worker would suffer irreparable damage" (Fagg 2016: 238). The concept of addressing spirituality returns as "youth workers who recognise their own connection to religion and/or spirituality can, in an unobtrusive, 'fellow traveller' manner, assist young people as they wrestle to form their own life directions, value as and identities" (Fagg 2016: 248).

Fagg (2016), Kimball (2008) and Green (2008) all indicate that if youth workers are to engage with spirituality they need to begin with their own journeys. As Culliford (2011) suggests, for those working with others around spirituality, the importance of "taking a spiritual history" (2011: 247) of themselves. This reflective exercise would help to prepare those working with young people.

Continuing to build on the work of Garza, Artman and Roehlekepartain (2007) there is a recognition "many youth workers and youth organisations that provide opportunities for spiritual development do not recognise them as spiritual, or may be reluctant to label them spiritual, for fear of retribution" (Pittman et al. 2008: 33). In referring to research with young people it was clear:

> teens identified simple everyday tasks and diversions as spiritual – things like "walking in the woods, talking with friends, listening to loud music, dancing, riding the bus and even washing dishes." Each of these activities, for different reasons, can create an opportunity for transcendence - the state in which the self is embedded in or connected to something greater.
>
> (Pittman et al. 2008: 33).

The idea spirituality may be in the ordinary events is useful to consider for youth workers. As many of the activity's youth workers are part of with young people are similar to those identified above.

2.5.3 In Summary

Youth work is a specific but small discipline of study, and with the decline of youth work in the UK, the application of this study to practice may be limited. Research about spirituality and youth work seems to be niche. It is worth noting that most literature is with faith-based youth workers about their practical involvement of spirituality in their youth work practice. The empirical research looked at Christian youth workers' spirituality in Ireland (Dallas 2009) and youth ministers in churches' spirituality in the United States (Strommen, Jones and Rahn 2001), both based in faith settings. But it is worth noting the work on spirituality and young people as a consideration for the inclusion of spiritual development in youth work curriculum or provision as a holistic perspective on young people. If so, the secular, or community-based, youth workers' understanding of spirituality, reflection on their own experiences and implications for their practice is worth investigating further - to look at whether spirituality impacts their youth work practice with young people and within their careers.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research aims to fill the research gap around English youth workers within secular contexts and spirituality. It aims to capture rich experiences of spirituality using a phenomenological theoretical perspective of youth workers. The importance of working with young people around spirituality has been established, and youth workers should consider their spirituality in preparation for working with young people. Assuming spirituality is an everyday experience (Pittman et al. 2008), the youth worker may be developing young people's spirituality in everyday contexts using similar approaches to informal education (Jeffs and Smith 2005).

This literature review provided an overview of the key elements that prepare the researcher to investigate, using the Venn diagram as a model through which to explore this. The *Knowing Youth Work* section highlighted the original spiritual roots of youth work and the move to youth work as we know it is more hesitant in reconnecting with the spiritual. The *Knowing Spirituality* section identified the spiritual definitions that will be drawn on within the data collection. Namely, spirituality has proved challenging to define across various helping professions; this research draws on spiritual definitions from professions working with young people such as education and Ofsted and touches on the spirituality debates. The *Knowing Young People* section examines the research with young people around spirituality to conclude that youth workers need to consider this because young people and children are at the age of spiritual development. They are questioning purpose, existence, identity and meaning to their lives, and youth workers are well placed to support young people in these transitional stages.

Finally, the *Knowing Youth Workers' Spirituality* section examines the empirical research around youth workers' spirituality. It found much of the peer-reviewed research was from the USA, and the emphasis was on faith-based youth workers and comparisons with community-based youth workers. The studies conclude that youth workers need more support to develop young people spiritually and have much to learn from each other in their "parallel universes" (Garza, Artman and Roehlekepartain 2007: 9). The theory-based work on youth work and spirituality draws together the empirical findings. It indicates a need for youth workers to examine their own spirituality in preparation for their practice with young people. The research hopes to hear the experiences of spirituality against the backdrop of a changing youth work profession for youth workers within secular settings, working with young people. The next chapter examines the

methods and methodology for investigating youth workers' experiences of spirituality and the impact on practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

> Picture this: we're into the second phase of interviews, and I'm getting ready for my next interview in a small meeting room. I'm hosting today. There are two glasses of water, a box of tissues, my echo pen, and my back up Dictaphone. I've tried to create an atmosphere that is familiar and comfortable, in a place where the participant is happy to meet me. Sometimes in my territory and sometimes in theirs. There's a soft knock at the door and I welcome in the participant. Closing the door behind them – we sit in chairs, at a small table, and begin the interview. I turn on my echo pen and Dictaphone. I start by asking them to reflect on the last interview, which explored their experience of youth work at the moment. The conversation is friendly, jovial and relaxed. The participants know me already and trust me, and the first interview has enabled them to build rapport with me in this context on this topic. I then turn the focus to the first questions: What are your experiences of spirituality? They begin talking; they are happy to talk and do so freely without restraint. There are minimal comments or questions from me, and the time passes swiftly.
>
> Bishop (2018) taken from Reflexive Journal, Paint a Picture.

This snapshot of my experience and motivation, during an interview in the data collection phase, captures my preparation, the experience I tried to create for my participants, so they felt at ease, and leads into the methodology chapter with a picture painted. This chapter justifies the choices of methodology and methods for data collection and analysis. It brings context to the topic of spirituality and youth work, following on from the literature review, concerning the research question and objectives. I will defend the theoretical underpinning of this research, including the justification for choosing an interpretative phenomenological methodology and using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse my data. My position in the study as an insider, practitioner-researcher, will be explored. I will discuss the way reflexivity is woven throughout this research, drawing on the freewriting, and use of bracketing, or epoché, through a series of bracketing interviews. Using Rolls and Relf's (2006) concept of bracketing meant I was able to identify any bias or preconceptions I had about youth work or spirituality and recognise what impact that may have on my research. I describe the data collection strategy, including the interview design, participant composition, and the recruitment strategy. I will go on to consider the steps taken to complete IPA on the raw data, and the ethics, rigour, and validity of the methodology and methods.

3.1.1 Defining methodology and methods

The methodology can be a confusing area of study and definitions of methodology and methods are referred to as *maze-like* in nature (Crotty 2015). To add further confusion, many research methods authors use both terms in differing ways. The impact of this on my research is captured here in part of a research poster I presented:

> This uncomfortable state of searching for the questions, and the theory that underpins that, lasted for a year. It is an iterative process that needs time to develop, but at moments shook my identity as a researcher and an academic.
>
> Bishop 2013 – Research Poster reflections

The use of a framework can help bring clarity to the research decisions; this study draws from Crotty's (2015) definitions of epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and methods; and Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) figure, the Qualitative researchers' Wheel of Research Choices. Both allow the researcher to view the decisions about epistemology and ontology, methodology, research methods and analysis as a choice that is interrelated and dependant on the research topic. This research lens in defining the world view, and perspective or paradigm is beneficial and allows the researcher to see how each impact on the other. The aims and objectives of the study are referred to again below, to contextualise the research.

3.1.2 The research aims and objectives

This research aims to explore youth workers' experiences of spirituality and the effect it has on their youth work practice.

There are three objectives in the data collection phase:

1. To identify youth workers' experiences of youth work practice.
2. To explore youth workers' experiences of spirituality.
3. To capture youth worker connections between spirituality and their youth work.

The first objective came from a need to build a baseline and develop a trusting relationship with the participant. This allowed space for some of the critical issues' youth workers face at the moment to be brought up, including how they survive and thrive, and something of a past, present, future career narrative.

The second objective explored the youth workers' personal experience of spirituality. This objective was examined through two different lenses – a life lens and a spiritual

lens. Research has found saying the word *spirituality* can be enough to close the conversation with some people. Consequently, asking about what brings purpose to their life, or how they view their life currently, would be a life lens way to discuss spirituality (Hay and Nye 2006, Mason 2005, Savage et al. 2006).

The final objective examined how youth workers see spirituality and youth work relating to each other. Do they implement spiritual development within youth work practice, to their career, or with their direct work with young people, or their staff team? The three objectives relate directly to the three phases of data collection, explained in full detail in the subsequent sections.

The following section will examine the philosophy of this research exploring the epistemology and ontological perspectives that underpin the research.

3.2 Philosophy of the research

The theoretical perspectives underpinning research identify the researcher's lens and shape the data collection and analysis (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013). The central aim of this research is listening to the voice of individual youth workers as they talk about their experience in youth work and experiences of spirituality within that context. The data to be collected was planned to capture rich experiences through a narrative with the researcher. The hope was the youth workers would explore the topics with minimal guidance from the researcher.

3.2.1 Epistemological perspectives

This research is qualitative and lies within an interpretive perspective. The study does not call for a search for absolute objective truth and is drawing on the personal lived experiences of participants. Therefore, the methodology took the form of phenomenological research; to explore the individual's experience of the phenomenon (Plano Clark and Creswell 2008). Moustakas explains the "empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience, to obtain comprehensive descriptions, that provide the basis for a structural analysis, that portrays the essences of the experiences" (Moustakas 1994: 13).

This research goes beyond the description of the experience and includes the interpretation by the researcher. Within phenomenology there are subtle differences

between traditions: some argue that phenomenology is a positivist approach (Moran 2000; Moran and Mooney 2002; Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013); others promote the descriptive phenomenology (Giorgi 2009), suggesting the purpose of phenomenology is to describe the experiences of others, to report back on this without an interpretation, and to avoid acknowledgement of the interpretation from the researcher. However, with a shared researcher and practitioner identity (Finlay 2011), the research would be *with* the participant rather than research *on* the participant, and therefore not positivist. Consequently, an early phenomenological approach following Husserl's (1931) work would not be suited to this research.

3.2.2 Interpretative phenomenology

An approach built on Heidegger's work, or, more specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology, was most appropriate for this research (Moran 2000; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). An approach to phenomenology that does not stop at the descriptive stage but goes beyond to include interpretative layers is found in Finlay's (2011) work, based within a therapist's practitioner-researcher dichotomy. Finlay's (2011) practitioner-researcher approach can be newly applied to a youth work practitioner-researcher role. Rather than ignoring the researcher in the study, this model recognises the researcher does bring assumptions, knowledge, and experience, and acknowledges that this adds value to the research (Finlay 2011). Even so, Husserl's (1931) concept of epoché, or bracketing of preconceptions, seemed applicable and is appropriate to include in this research. Langdridge (2007) argues the researcher should still try and achieve epoché even if this is not genuinely possible. The bracketing here is then unbracketed at the analysis and writing stages. The use of bracketing, and specifically bracketing interviews (Rolls and Relf 2006), is justified later in this chapter.

3.2.3 Narrative research

While the epistemological and ontological stance is based on interpretative phenomenology, there is space for an alliance with the narrative research field (Clandinin 2007; Bold 2011; Riessman 2008). Insights from narrative approaches shape the research to interviews (Elliot 2009), especially the idea of longitudinal data collection to allow for the development of narrative and reflection as the participants talk about their experiences. Elliot has incorporated three crucial points about narrative research into this study:

1. An interest in people's lived experiences and an appreciation for the temporal nature of that experience.
2. A desire to empower research participants and allow them to contribute to determining what are the most salient themes in an area of research.
3. An interest in process and change over time.

(Elliot 2009: 6)

This is achieved with three phases of interviews over 18 months. The youth workers are involved in the analysis of their transcripts between each of the three phases. This method allows for a more rigorous approach to analyzing the data for themes.

This research is qualitative and interpretive because it aims to search for experiences of youth workers regarding their practice and spirituality. It comes from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective valuing the participants' individual experiences. The study is underpinned by a phenomenological approach to research with a specific focus of not only catching descriptive experiences, but also interpreting the data and drawing out themes. It draws on narrative theory (Elliott 2009) that values the use of longitudinal research to capture the narrative of participants, in this case the experiences of the youth workers, over the time in history where youth work budget restrictions and cuts are creating seemingly perpetual redundancy cycles.

3.2.4 Choosing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is based on the work of Heidegger and follows the tradition of interpretative phenomenology. It was developed by Jonathan Smith (1996) and captured in detail in the seminal text of the same name by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). The use of IPA is characterised through the three areas of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiographic (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). This study embraces these three areas and comes from an experiential perspective, aiming to capture the voice of the participants and to interpret further what they are saying. Within the research, the experience, or phenomenology, is twofold: (i) the youth workers' experiences of spirituality; (ii) their experiences of youth work, at this time in history (November 2013 - March 2015).

IPA has increased in its prevalence over the last ten years, in research within psychology and research around the lived experiences of managing life with specific health conditions. Health psychology (Biggerstaff and Thompson 2008; Brocki and Wearden

2006) and patients' experiences of illness (Parys, Smith and Rober 2014) are the original foci of research. There appears to be a recent increase in the use of IPA in sectors other than health psychology, such as education (Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez 2011), drawing from the work of Van Manen (1990).

The use of phenomenological research to examine youth workers' experience is sparse. There is research with youth workers about the feeling of not knowing what to do in practice (Anderson-Nathe 2010), although this is not specifically IPA, and would align with descriptive phenomenology. The use of IPA to analyse youth work practitioners' experiences still seems appropriate: with the increase in educational IPA research (Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez 2011) youth work's roots in informal education (Batsleer and Davies 2010; Jeffs and Smith 2005), and the links to Van-Manen (1990). The use of IPA to explore spirituality is evident in research with participants around the topic (Cassar and Shinebourne 2012) and within professional practice with psychologists (Malins 2011; Mueller 2013) and palliative care nurses (Vachon, Fillion and Achille 2009).

Using IPA as the chosen method and methodology for this research topic about spirituality and youth work seems appropriate. However, it is worth considering some of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of following IPA with spirituality and youth workers in this study, especially given youth work is a relatively new area to be researched using IPA. Good research with youth workers is often participatory, co-created, creative, and emphasising improving practice (McNiff 2017). As a strength, IPA has a 6-step approach to analysis (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) that makes the findings likely to be rigorous and robust, more so than a thematic analysis of the research data (Braun and Clarke 2006; Guest, Macqueen, and Namey 2012). Although a strength, this could also be a weakness in terms of the time spent analysing the data.

Considering the phenomenological basis of this research around youth workers' spirituality experiences, IPA was appropriate in capturing experiences and incorporating interpretation within the research analysis. IPA allowed the richness of an insider, youth worker, researching to add value to the findings (Finlay 2009). This position has been viewed as a strength but could be a limitation because the insider view could influence the research somehow. The use of bracketing was introduced to enable preconceptions (Tufford and Newman 2010) to be captured during data collection, and then the bracketed text was released ready for the analysis. The bracketing was an intuitive

process to enable more in-depth insight into the research topic (Finlay 2008); further explored later in the chapter.

The youth workers' experiences could have been captured in semi-structured interviews (Roberts 2013) in IPA research providing rich data ready for analysis (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). However, in analysing the data and presenting back in superordinate themes, it could be argued that the flow of the narratives from participants would be interrupted. If capturing experiences or narratives of youth workers, it might be more appropriate to use narrative methods (Riessman 2008. Bold 2011, Elliott 2009, Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou 2013). Although narrative methods were considered, IPA was flexible enough to capture narratives if chosen; with examples in IPA of cases presented in findings (Eatough and Smith 2006a/2006b). In choosing a methodology to research lived experiences (Van Manen 1990), there is a high degree of researcher choice, as evidenced in selecting IPA to research youth workers' experiences of spirituality

Future researchers could follow other methods and methodologies within Qualitative Inquiry (Butler-Kisber 2010), to bring a different perspective to this research topic. For example, narrative inquiry (Clandinin 2007, McIsaac Bruce 2008), arts-based methods (Butler-Kisber 2010, Riessman 2008), thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), participatory action research (McNiff 2017) and even a heuristic approach incorporating the insider-research perspective more clearly (Finlay 2009; Moustakas 1990). Exploring spirituality within an IPA framework is evident in research (Cassar and Shinebourne 2012) and within professional practice with teachers (Gillespie 2019), psychologists (Malins 2011; Mueller 2013) and with palliative care nurses (Vachon, Fillion and Achille 2009).

The exploration of the theoretical underpinning of IPA, and justification for choosing it as an analysis technique, has set the scene for explaining the step-by-step process of IPA later in this chapter. Before looking at data collection and data analysis the methods of conducting the literature review will be considered. I will then reflect on my position as a researcher, moving into the use of reflexivity throughout the research.

3.3 Literature Review Methods

3.3.1 Search Criteria

At the beginning of drawing together a research proposal for the thesis about youth work and spirituality, the focus on empirical research with youth workers about spirituality remained fluid. Initial searches to indicate scope for the final search criteria were carried out. Initially, the search criteria, or exclusion and inclusion criteria, was that:

- the methodology of these studies needed to be qualitative.
- the research should capture the youth workers' experiences of spirituality, or their voices.
- the research was conducted in the UK.
- the participants were secular youth workers.

The initial search followed a snowballing method with relevant database searches including Academic Search Complete, EThOS, PsychInfo and ERIC. Two search criteria terms were used: "Youth Work*" and "Spirituality;" the identified articles should have both terms in the title or abstract. Several articles were found that matched all the criteria, but were not empirical research and were theoretical, youth work practice resources or reflective thought pieces. These were rejected for this search but are referred to in the literature review section about *Knowing Youth Work* and *Knowing Spirituality*.

The search included studies in books, theses, articles, and reports, but came back with a small number of empirical studies (Dallas 2009; Green 2006; McFeeters 2010). Therefore, the search was expanded to include research within countries outside of the UK; empirical research about spirituality with any youth workers (secular or faith-based); and mixed methods research. The literature review identifies the critical empirical research found with details of the author, the title of the study, year of publication, methods, a summary of findings and any limitations.

3.3.2 Geographical Clusters

It is worth noting the geographic location of empirical research about youth work and spirituality splits into four significant clusters across the world:

1. Search Institute in the USA (Roehlekepartain 2007; Strommen, Jones and Rahn 2001; Scales et al. 1995).

2. Positive Youth Development (PYD) and spirituality research in the USA (Lerner, Roeser, and Phelps 2008).
3. Youth Work and spirituality in Australia (Daughtry and Devenish 2016).
4. Youth Work and spirituality in the UK (Dallas 2009; Green 2006).

3.3.3 Narrative Literature review

This literature review is narrative (Bryman 2012), allied with the interpretative nature of the research (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). The themes identified synthesise essential research, building an argument that leads to my research question and positions this research within the field of youth work and spirituality research.

3.4 Positionality of research

This section will explore the positionality and reflexivity used within this IPA research project. The positionality statement of the researcher describes the research lens and beliefs that may influence the study (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013). As a youth work practitioner previously involved in working with young people around spirituality, and in particular Christian spirituality, I have a professional and personal connection to this research. This section of the methodology will unpick the considerations for this thesis. I examined my spiritual journey and career pathway in the introduction, and so here the dichotomy and potential symbiosis between the researcher and the practitioner are investigated (Finlay 2011).

3.4.1 Researcher and practitioner: A dichotomy or symbiosis?

Phenomenology is often described as a positivist approach to research (Savin-Baden and Howell Major 2013), examining the description of experiences of others and remaining detached from the work, by bracketing ourselves off as a researcher. It can seem incompatible to be an insider, or practitioner, in the area being studied, or if not incompatible then irrelevant. But the use of IPA allows the researcher to be actively involved in the interpretation of the participants' experiences. Therefore, the researcher's connections to the subject matter do become important. Researcher phenomenologist Finlay (2011), advocates for a practice-based approach to phenomenology. The researcher and practitioner are seen by Finlay (2011) as a valuable and useful connection. I have embraced this to argue the practitioner research relationship is beneficial and symbiotic; that it can be likened to social capital, where Field (2003)

defines it to “be summed up in two words: relationships matter” (2003: 1). As I reflected after one of the data-collection interviews:

> I am also very aware that my relationship with these youth workers is very odd, but also my links from working at other organisations and passing connections are really helping to put people at ease. I wouldn't be able to be in this insider position as someone who was coming in new – I am drawing on relationships that are 6 or 7 years old; people know me and seem to trust me with quite personal things.
>
> My data collection journal p. 17

During the recruitment phase, my previous professional relationships with youth workers in practice enabled me quickly to recruit a cohort of participants, with a high conversion rate, who were happy to be involved and committed to fitting interview appointments into their diaries. Our previous, positive, working relationships and the trust they already had in me as a practitioner helped my new role with them as a researcher; the comparison to Field’s (2003) social capital model is most evident here. When collecting the data, these previous relationships facilitated a fluidity to the interviews and freedom in speaking about spirituality within youth work.

> The session went well, and he was quite nervous, but my previous experience and relationship with him seemed to calm him, and while he said he might clam up, he didn't.
>
> My data collection journal p. 30

As a *practitioner,* I had not previously discussed the subject matter of spirituality with the participants; as *the researcher,* I was now forming new connections with the participants. The researcher identity was taking over. However, still, my role as practitioner enabled me to have empathy for my participants as they spoke about their youth work career pathways and the issues they faced in their current positions. Some stories were like my own, and I felt new connections to them as colleagues. However, the IPA researcher identity again took over my *interview voice* and paused my *practitioner voice* in my head. My researcher identity navigated the practitioner to freewriting in the reflective journal after the interviews. Despite my connections with the life stories shared, I did not lead or impact the direction of the interviews. For instance, one participant Michael (a self-selected pseudonym), mid-way through his second interview, his slight frustration at the idea of the interviews being undirected:

> P: yeah, so there we are, next question…

> I: …You want me to do the next questions, and I don't do next questions (laughs)
>
> P: I know you don't do next questions, I know, I like the fact you didn't do those questions, because looking at the last one, there were huge bursts of me just talking, and then you'd do an "umm," and I launch. It's like I'm having a counselling session, it's wonderful!
>
> (Michael 2: 321-327)

In line with Finlay's (2011) practitioner-based phenomenology, I believe within IPA, my insider position has been beneficial to the process and adds value to the research. However, in one interview, my insider position could have been a hindrance:

> At the end of his interview, he added that spirituality was too high of a category, very grand… somewhere up there. Whereas he was more bothered about day-to-day things down on the ground. I was aware that he didn't want to offend me as he shared this, as having worked together previously, and he knew that I'm a Christian.
>
> My data collection journal p. 37

I am more passionate about the subject as an insider researcher. I can see how the findings influence practice in youth work and have a broader impact on policy and youth work education. For me, spirituality is a blurry concept, and our ability to fully box off elements of ourselves in research is equally blurry. Green's (2015) idea of a spirituality reflective practitioner in youth work resonates with my research here, but the concept is about being a Spirituality Reflexive Researcher. The use of reflexive journal and bracketing will be explored more fully in the next section.

3.5 Reflexivity versus epoché

3.5.1 Epoché definitions

In 1931, Husserl proposed the concept of epoché as a "process by which we attempt to abstain from our presuppositions, those preconceived ideas we might have about the things we are investigating" (Langdridge 2007: 17). One approaches the research with doubt, and specifically doubt about "the natural attitude or the biases of everyday knowledge" (Langdridge 2007: 17). Achieving epoché would allow phenomenological researchers, specifically within the transcendental approach, to have a "new way of looking at things, a way that requires that we learn to see what stands before our eyes, what we can distinguish and describe" (Moustakas 1994: 33). Epoché, and a focus on the "things themselves," is challenged by those within an existential, hermeneutic approach, such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (Langdridge 2007). They argued we

should strive to *bracket off* these biases, but Merleau-Ponty (2012) argued the isolated, God's eye view is never entirely possible.

3.5.2 Bracketing definitions

Alongside the difficulty in achieving this state of epoché, other phenomenological researchers have argued the process of bracketing is not well defined. Some researchers apply pragmatism to this, including the need to bracket off at every stage of the research, not just within data collection and analysis (Chan, Chien, and Fung 2013). They promote the use of questioning and reflection or reflexivity throughout the study (Finlay 2008; 2011) and taking time in isolation, individually, for reflective meditation to achieve a sense of *internal closure* before beginning the research (Moustakas 1994). Finlay (2008) attempts to balance the researcher-practitioner position, describing the balance of epoché and the use of reflexivity as a dance between the two. Finlay's descriptions of the regularity of this dance throughout the research data collection stages, shows how close to the surface this debate is within the interviews and skills of the researcher; arguing we should adopt a research attitude open to new concepts and experiences (Finlay 2008). However, Giorgi (2011) argued the step of epoché is not given space in IPA, and Van Manen (2017) claims IPA is not even phenomenological research, but Interpretative Psychological Analysis. Smith (2018) disputes these opinions and recasts the IPA basis. The desire to remain open, and yet suspend bias led me to develop a pragmatic response to including epoché, bracketing, and reflexivity within my research using IPA.

3.5.3 The tensions between bracketing and reflexivity

The bracketing process in this research has been introduced for two main reasons: Firstly, to make me aware of my preconceptions ahead of each data collection stage (Tufford and Newman 2010); Secondly, as an aid to the reflexive process by using a skilled bracketing interviewer (Rolls and Relf 2006) to inquire into areas I was not aware of. Fischer (2009) presents the notion of these two approaches to bracketing, or "dual bracketing process" as "setting aside of the researcher's assumptions" and the "hermeneutic revisiting of data" (Fischer 2009: 583).

In identifying preconceptions (Tufford and Newman 2010) ahead of each data collection phase, I addressed issues of bias, previous experiences of mine or concerns about the topics. However, this was not primarily to remove the researcher from the data collection but to ensure the participants' experiences would come through clearly in the data

collection. The bracketing interviews, and the reflexive journals were re-read as part of the analysis process, and the re-immersion in the interviews. The reflective journals from data collection provide my reflections after each interview. The bracketing interviews provide detailed reflection ahead of each phase; This helped with the interpretation phase, but it also enabled me to focus more on the participants' experiences. It ensured that as an interviewer I helped them elaborate, rather than linking what they said to my own experiences in empathy (Brinkmann and Kvalé 2015). Attending to reflexivity in IPA research has been coined as paying attention to the *echoes* or the resonance between research and participant experiences (Goldspink and Engward 2018), to translate reflexivity more fully in the IPA process.

It could be seen that these two potentially opposing views to bracketing are in competition, or incompatible, in their view. However, as Finlay (2009) identifies, this is a dance between reduction and reflexivity. So, whilst there may be tension between the two approaches to bracketing, they can also coexist. Finlay (2009) warns against bracketing, encouraging introspection that then leads to "unduly privileging" the researcher (Finlay 2009: 215). This was a key consideration in deciding not to include many quotes from within my bracketing interviews.

Whilst it is recognised that the inclusion would clearly show my presence within the bracket, I also felt that this, in some cases, would emphasise my responses or reactions to the research questions. In IPA, it is about interpreting the participants' experiences rather than retelling the researchers' own experiences (Goldspink and Engward 2018). The bracketing interviews brought up several issues, including exploring my own bias, the similar experiences I had around my redundancy in a youth work context and my own western spiritual and Christian viewpoints to the research.

3.5.4 Innovative pairing of individual reflexivity and the use of "other" in bracketing Interviews

The approach to reflexivity and bracketing within this research involved drawing on a range of reflective tools (Chan, Chien, and Fung 2013; Elbow 1973; Finlay 2008; Moustakas 1994; Rolls and Relf 2006). Reflexivity is a familiar value to my role as a youth work practitioner (Bolton and Delderfield 2018; Jeffs and Smith 2010; Krueger 2005) and youth work lecturer (Emslie 2009). The balance of my role as a practitioner (youth worker or lecturer), researcher, and knowing my participants, presented several

challenges, including the potential for influencing the direction of the interviews. Including bracketing throughout the research process, as explained by Chan, Chien, and Fung (2013), seemed sensible to counterbalance this. My research drew from theory around bracketing (Chan, Chien, and Fung 2013; Finlay 2008; Fischer 2009; Rolls and Relf 2006; Tufford and Newman 2010) and reflexivity (Finlay 2002b; Wagstaff et al. 2014). This allowed me to develop an innovative way of pairing reflexivity and bracketing interviews within IPA. The next two sections will detail the approaches utilised for reflexivity using freewriting in a reflective journal, and bracketing interviews with a skilled bracketer (Rolls and Relf 2006).

3.5.5 Justification of reflexivity in IPA

The use of reflexivity within IPA research is viewed as good practice by influential researchers in IPA (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009; Finlay 2011). It helps to capture the researcher's question, thoughts and reflection in action that sometimes crowd in while interviewing participants or during the process of analysis – reflective writing can act as a form of bracketing in its own right. Reflexivity allows the practitioner-researcher to be iterative in the way the research is conducted, building on previous interviews, and improving research skills. This research used reflexive journals, alongside bracketing interviews, to accompany the whole research process. The following sections will justify this within IPA research and examine the innovative use of pairing reflexivity and bracketing in IPA research. It draws on research that links reflexivity with spiritual practices, including isolation and meditation reflection (Moustakas 1994), and introspection (Finlay 2002a). It will explain how the reflexive data will be used throughout the thesis.

3.5.6 The use of freewriting in reflective journals throughout the research process

Awareness of your *being* within research is vital as this can affect the validity of the data collected. In my work with students, I use a process called *freewriting* (Elbow 1973) to help students develop writing reflectively. Elbow describes the process of writing for ten or fifteen minutes, without stopping; writing what comes into your head; and if nothing does, to write about that "stuck" place instead. Having experienced the use of this method personally and professionally, I chose to apply this during the data collection and data analysis phase as a method of accompanying the research within research journals (Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson and Poole 2004).

3.5.6.1 Freewriting practicalities

The reflective freewriting process allowed me to capture all the thoughts from my head following each interview with a participant; this can be compared to Moustakas' (1994) idea of taking time in isolation to gain internal closure using reflective meditation. During the interview, I aimed to remove myself from the interview as much as possible, to ensure that the direction of it was participant-led, to allow the participants' experiences to be fully evident. The process of freewriting followed the interview, after showing the participant out or leaving the venue I was interviewing at. The site of the freewriting was either the interview room or a café close to the office location. The background noise of a café sometimes helped me focus more, and the silence of the university room was sometimes more of a struggle. It was clear the space for freewriting was valuable (Sword 2016); equally the use of a different journal for each of the stages of research (data collection, analysis) seemed important. Each free written entry was handwritten, and there is something about the pattern and rhythm of this writing practice that is like a spiritual discipline (Peace 1995). On the few occasions when interviews had ended, and I had an interruption before being able to free write, the process felt incomplete (Moustakas 1994). This process of reflection had an impact on the number of interviews I was able to conduct per day, as both the interview itself and the reflective freewriting consumed a large amount of energy and attention. After the second interview in one day, I reflected in my journal:

> Can't cope with two in one day – not so long to reflect and all becomes a bit blurred.
>
> My data collection journal p. 18

During freewriting, the focus was on either interview content (IC), reflection on methods used (RMU) in the interview, and/or an evaluation of my research skill (ERS) in interviewing. The freewriting helped to capture some of the thoughts and reflections during the interview itself that were not appropriate to speak while it was taking place. Figure 3 below depicts the three elements that were the focus of the freewriting. The elements were not a checklist to complete but instead used loosely as a guide in my mind as I spent the time freewriting.

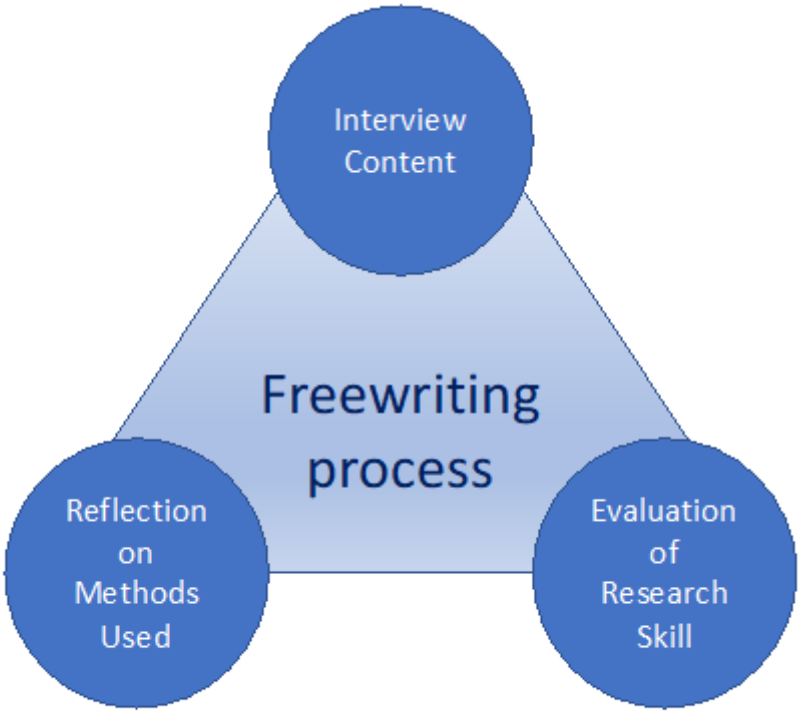

Figure 3 - The elements of freewriting

3.5.6.2 Reflection on freewriting

Looking back over the journals now, the content was often observations or thoughts about what the participant said; it included reflections on the interviews that either connected with me or challenged me. At the start of the data collection phase, the journal focused on the research methods and my interview technique; it looked at the way that I paid attention to my feelings during the interview and how that hopefully did not impact the interview contents itself. An example was during an interview where a participant was moved to tears when talking about mortality – my initial (bracketed) response was to offer comfort or to fill the silence with something. However, in this case, I sat with the participant in the quiet and waited for him to resume speaking.

In addition to the freewriting, I undertook bracketing interviews in between the three phases of data collection and before step 6 of IPA. The next section will briefly situate the benefits and practicalities of using bracketing of interviews paired with the reflexivity process complementing the freewriting.

3.5.7 Bracketing interviews

The use of reflexivity in research is an essential element for my work within phenomenological research. IPA embraces the dialogue between the researcher and the phenomenon as expressed by the participants. However, the subject of spirituality and youth work is close to me personally and professionally, and I wanted to use an additional reflective tool. The concept of bracketing within phenomenological research (Husserl 1931) is common in the descriptive phenomenological tradition, separating the researcher from the description of the phenomenon. Within IPA, the researcher is engaged with the interpretation process and the voice of participants within the hermeneutic cycle. Rolls and Relf (2006) highlight the benefits of *bracketing interviews* to contribute to the "production of knowledge and amplify the researcher's reflexive capacity" (Rolls and Relf 2006: 1). The bracketing interviews should be conducted by a skilled *bracketer* with an understanding of the topic, but not linked to the research participants. The next section explains the bracketing interviews methods I used in this research.

3.5.7.1 Practicalities of bracketing interviews.

Ahead of the data collection phases I recruited a bracketer who was known to me and understood youth work, was working in a university teaching, and researching, had experience of interviewing techniques through her professional background and a common interest in spirituality. She agreed to meet with me in-between phase 1 and 2, phase 2 and 3, and ahead of the final step 6 of IPA analysis where the superordinate themes are established.

The bracketing interviews were led by the bracketer, following my briefing her of the role and expectations. They took place in either my house or her house and were recorded for transcription purposes. The first bracketing interview initially involved questions around the topic of my research and the data collection organisation. The first phase of interviews had already been completed. The bulk of these interviews were the participants talking about their youth work experience; it was appropriate to meet after this phase for a bracketing interview. This topic was familiar to the participants, and so they predictably spoke fluently about this, with only one directional question at the start of the interviews from me to start them off. In other research, it may be useful to meet ahead of all phases of interviews.

This bracketing interview went on to open up any concerns, worries, apprehension, or prejudgements I had around the 2nd phase of interviews. This 2nd phase was exploring the participants' spirituality and, as the literature review found often spirituality research can have a Christian bias (Hay and Nye 2006), I wanted to make sure this was explored through bracketing. The bracketer asked directional, awkward, and pointed questions to try and uncover anything that needed to be *put on the shelf* (Rolls and Relf 2006) ahead of that 2nd phase. A similar interview format and questioning technique were used between phase 2 and 3, and ahead of generating the superordinate themes once all the interviews were analysed. The final bracketing interview focused on my own preference bias for research areas; we discussed the themes that seemed to be arising from the participants' interviews and whether these were participant-led. The balance between researcher interpretation and participant rich descriptive experience can be a delicate balance, and the final bracketing interview allowed this to be brought to the surface entirely.

Each bracketing interview was transcribed straight after, and as with the participants' interviews, this was then sent out to the bracketer. We were both able to read the transcript before the next interview, and this helped to pick up some of the themes or questions that were asked the last time again following a new phase of interviewing the participants.

3.5.7.2 Reflection on bracketing interviews

In the same way that the participants benefited from the few months in between each phase, I did also. The regularity of the bracketing interviews allowed reflection in between. I built a relationship with the bracketer over the time where I trusted her to ask tough questions for the benefit of the research.

One of the key elements I found helpful in these interviews was to unpack how I felt about spiritual discussions that were different from my beliefs, and how my Christian beliefs might affect my responses to what participants spoke about. This preparation enabled me to silence the internal non-researcher voice within the interviews; my personal views (practitioner views included) were placed thoughtfully upon the shelf having been explored in this bracketing interview. This shared process with the bracketer helped me to see biases that my solitary, reflective writing may not have uncovered. The bracketing interviews were useful and have been used alongside the reflective journals

as reflexive data. The quotes are interspersed within the thesis. However, as the bracketing interviews are primarily a safe space to bracket off my own biases, these have only been included in a few cases.

3.5.8 Using this method with IPA research – justification and pairing in IPA research

Often reflexivity is implicit within IPA through the write-up and the analysis using the first-person voice (Gee 2011). However, the use of a deliberate, regular, rhythmic reflective act was an essential part of the reflective process. As practitioners capturing our reflections can sometimes feel forced and unnecessary, and once qualified, many youth workers would argue, they do not have the time to reflect. One of my participants captured this well:

> Having that time to reflect is important, and I don't think we do that enough, certainly in youth work terms. I know at college it's sort of drummed into you, and people write reflective practice notes; and then, as you go on, you write fewer and fewer of them; and then the reflection takes place in the car journey to the next meeting; and then you just listen to the radio…. All the reflection disappears down the plughole; or else you end up doing it at 3 in the morning when you're really worried. I don't fit it into a neat little box, and that's a bit like spirituality, you can't fit it into a box.
>
> (Michael 3: 400-410)

This deliberate, and explicit, act of reflection enabled the moment to be captured, and then analysed later, and within the data collection phase to allow space to grow as a research practitioner. As Michael alluded to, the act of reflection and reflexivity itself is a spiritual process.

3.5.9 How reflexivity features in the thesis

The freewriting and bracketing interviews are highlighted throughout this thesis (Wagstaff et al. 2014) when a reflective comment might help to add to the understanding of each section of the thesis. This process enables the reflexive voice to be shown, and the pattern of moving between academic writing style and reflexivity is smooth, without taking away from the structure.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Introduction to data collection methods

This section will outline the ethical considerations; recruitment and selection strategy; finally, the data collection methods used to explore youth workers' experiences of spirituality and the impact on their youth work practice.

3.6.2 Ethical Approval

The ethical considerations of this PhD research are discussed here; the full ethical approval certificate is in Appendix A. To undertake this research ethically, I needed to demonstrate I had carefully thought through each stage of the research process. I underpinned the research with ethical guidelines from the Social Research Association (SRA 2003) and within the youth work researcher ethical guidelines (Batsleer 2010) including the Ethical Conduct for Youth Work (NYA 2004). The ethos of youth work ethics (Banks 2010; Sercombe 2010) explained my recruitment strategy, the methods I would use to collect my data, how I would keep it safe, and keep the participants free from harm. Being ethically aware involved developing an Interview Schedule (Appendix B), Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix C), and Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). It is worth noting here that the interview schedule was only referred to if needed, and to align with IPA the interviews were guided by the main interview question asked at the start. I gained ethical approval from Coventry University Ethical Approval Panel in July 2012 before I conducted the research, the sections below explain in detail how I took this into account at each stage.

3.6.3 Informed Consent

The participants were all over 18 and able to give consent for themselves to take part in the research. The participants had/have the right to withdraw at any point for any reason. They were able to contact the researcher to withdraw, as they had contact details and were in touch with the researcher during the research process. The participants were a part of the data analysis in between each interview; having received a transcribed copy of their interview, they were able to give feedback on this. This means each participant had the chance to correct any mistakes made at the transcription stage or withdraw any section of the interview that may have been confidential, or they no longer wanted to share. Some errors were corrected but none of the participants withdrew at any stage, personally or from any sections of the interviews.

3.6.4 Transcribing the interviews and keeping the data safe

The interview data were recorded as audio files to transcribe for the analysis. I transcribed the first five interviews, and due to time factors, the rest were by the University transcriber password-protected, encrypted and then verified by me. The use of a third party to transcribe was a pragmatic decision due to the need for a swift turnaround before the second and third phases of interviews. All participants needed to have their first interview, and have it transcribed ready for them to read in advance of their second interview, and then again for the third phase of interviews. The aim was for each phase to take 4-6 months to allow for enough space between interviews and not too much time to pass. The use of a transcriber meant this happened promptly. Following the first draft of transcribed interview data, I had to re-listen to the interview tape and check for accuracy and mistakes. Re-listening enabled me to become fully immersed in the interview data in advance of the 2nd phase of interviews. The rigorous IPA process allowed me to become extremely familiar with the data. It balanced the importance of a transcriber versus keeping up to speed with the interview timetable. The participants had an active part in drawing out the themes of their interviews, ensuring stronger validity. Only the researcher, transcriber and participant had access to the raw interview data; the transcriber only had access to the interview recording and not the consent forms. Only the researcher kept the consent forms in a lockable cabinet; this ensured the data remains confidential.

3.6.5 Anonymisation

The transcribed interview data was anonymised to remove people's names and organisation names. Any other anonymisation only happened after selecting excerpts for inclusion in the thesis itself. I then included anonymisation of locations, and project names, in some cases providing a pseudonym for ease in reading. The participants each selected their pseudonym, so that they, but no-one else, would be able to identify themselves in the research. The researcher kept a coding grid of participants and the pseudonym used for them; this again was kept confidential. The anonymised interview data was encrypted and then stored securely on the researcher's private and secure drive provided by Coventry University. The encrypted interview transcript was password-protected to ensure security when emailing to participants. All paperwork associated with the data collection (consent forms, etc.) was kept as a hard copy within a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office or on the private, secure drive provided by Coventry University.

3.6.6 Recruitment and Selection Strategy

The recruitment and selection of participants followed a purposive sampling (Bell 2014) technique. As an insider researcher (Finlay 2011) based in the West Midlands, I had a "long list" of youth workers known to me through my previous roles as a youth work practitioner and then as University Lecturer of a Midlands-based youth work degree, co-ordinating student placements and organisations. The recruitment of participants was drawn from the long list of youth work practitioners known to me already. Using IPA, I only needed to recruit a small number of participants to allow me to interview in-depth and capture rich experiential data (Guest, Bunce and Johnson 2006; Reid, Flowers, and Larkin 2005; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009; Wagstaff et al. 2014).

3.6.6.1 Exclusion and Inclusion Criteria

I began the recruitment stage by drawing up a list of inclusion and exclusion criteria for the selection of the participants. I wanted the participants experienced in working with young people; therefore, as Dallas (2009) did, I set a benchmark for recruitment of at least five years' experience in practice. The number of participants was ideally up to 12 youth workers who were: either currently practising, or who had been practising within the last two years; experiencing or had been in, the current youth work climate of cuts, redundancies, and changes to the youth work identity.

I looked to recruit JNC qualified youth workers in the main, but this was not an essential criterion. I did not consider age, or ethnicity or disability when recruiting the youth workers. However, in planning to recruit participants, it was decided the sample would be a mix of male and female participants. The mix of gender was an important consideration as a study on women and girl's spirituality (Slee, Porter, and Phillips 2016) suggests women find it easier to talk about spirituality than men and experience it in diverse ways. Although, in their research in the USA with faith-based youth workers, Garza, Artman, and Roehlekepartain (2007) found "men were more likely than women to view spiritual development as 'essential' to their work" (2007: 19). I wanted to have a mix of gender to allow for both theories, with an openness to see if gender affected how freely they spoke about spirituality.

The spiritual mix of participants, while not homogenous, is evidence of the diversity within the UK. In exploring a topic often undiscussed having an idea about the youth workers'

childhood upbringing, current faith or connections to spirituality would be hard to predict. Therefore, while the intention was to recruit youth workers who were not in faith-based settings, their spiritual heritage was unknown until the interview. This shows the diversity of youth workers in the sector – and while this research aims to fill a gap in speaking with "secular" or "community-based" youth workers it is hard to know what the makeup of the participants in other research projects was (Dallas 2009; Garza, Artman and Roehlekepartain 2007).

The final group of participants was a mixture of age, gender, experience, and location of youth work - this is near to a *homogenous sample* as possible within youth work at this time (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009).

The organisational setting needed to be not in an organisation that directly delivered spiritual curriculum to young people, such as a faith-based setting. However, I did not exclude organisations that had hints of spirituality in their historical organisational objectives. As discussed in the literature review, I do believe spirituality is a foundational component of youth work, although this did not necessarily mean that organisations delivered "spiritual youth work" specifically. The youth workers were from the West Midlands around my network. For ease of scheduling the data collection around my lecturing workload and utilising the network of youth workers I already had, I chose to prioritise those workers who were geographically closer to me. As the interview process took over 18 months, several youth workers moved jobs to organisations further afield, and I continued to meet these workers in their settings.

3.6.6.2 The long list

Initially, I drew up a list of all the youth workers based in the West Midlands, known to me, and still in employment within youth work, with a mix of face-to-face workers and managers. If they were not currently employed in a youth work context, or they had lost their job during the interview process the participants would still be valid. Still, they needed to have been practising when the initial National Occupational Standards for youth work were around in 2008, that had a remit of spiritual development (LLUK 2008). The setting they worked in needed to be a non-faith-based setting, but the spirituality, of the long list participants, was unknown to me and was not a topic of conversation I had previously had with the participants. The long list included 75 youth workers, who were known to me as a practitioner or a university youth work lecturer. Having generated this

long list, it was condensed firstly by distance geographically and then to those who were regularly involved in the BA in Youth Work, and so those in most recent professional contact with me. Doing this helped me minimise travel time and hopefully focused on those who would feel more comfortable with me when it came to be talking about themselves and their spiritual experiences.

3.6.6.3 The short list

I went over the list of 75 potential participants and reduced them to a shorter list of around 40 participants, all of which I would have been happy with interviewing. As they were all known to me, I was concerned that if I invited all of them to take part in the research that I might over recruit. I was confident most would say yes, based on our previous working relationships of support and involvement with young people. The ease at which the participants would speak about the topic was not a consideration. The point of the research was to explore the topic, and this may be awkward, but acceptable, for some. I then went over the list of 40 potential participants and looked at a geographical distance, and ease of reciprocal working relationship and divided them up into three distinct groups of around 10 - 15. I ordered the groups into the first, second and third wave. The initial plan was to invite the first group to interview in the hope of recruiting up to 12 participants, and if these were not forthcoming, I would email out to the second group and then the third group. The first group dropped down to 15 potential participants.

3.6.6.4 Inviting to interview

This stage was particularly hard to move through as described in my data collection reflective journal:

> Tomorrow I plan to email the participants to invite them to be part of my research – I hope they'll then reply either way. I think I'll need to chase most up afterwards. I'm almost too scared to send it because:
>
> What if it's not worded right? What if they ignore me and don't reply? What if they all say yes! What if they don't say anything interesting?!
>
> Either way, there is no PhD without interviews, so I must do it.
>
> My data collection journal p. 1

The first group was invited to interview via an email that included details of the study, the participant information sheet, and a brief personalized message requesting them to take part. The use of work email addresses was chosen as my preferred method of communication with the youth workers. My reflective reaction to the responses I received

shows my relief at the recruitment response rate and the affirmative answer to engage with the topic.

> Responses came back from several people today about my PhD. What interested me the most was the responses I've received back - they ranged from three saying yes straight away, to two offering other more suitable candidates, even suggesting that they would sit down and talk through who would be more spiritual than them! Others included not thinking they were a 'youth worker' (because they're not qualified), or not thinking they are the 'right' youth worker as they're not practising face to face work. Interestingly no-one's said no yet, and no one has spoken about not wanting to talk about spirituality - just that others may be more spiritual than them and they've recommended I talk to faith-based youth workers - which I'm not searching for - I really want those in non-faith-based settings.
>
> My data collection journal p. 4

3.6.6.5 The nine participants

The conversion from the shortlist to participants was high, with nine participants agreeing to take part and six declining the offer but wishing me well in the research. Nine participants were enough for an IPA project (Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez 2011; Reid, Flowers, and Larkin 2005; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) and therefore the other two groups were not invited to take part in the research. The group consisted of five men and four women, with eight qualified as youth workers, and all were having more than five years' experience of working with young people; see Table 1 for an overview of the participants. They worked for a variety of organisations including the local council, voluntary sector, housing-based youth work, caring organisation, school-based youth work, community-based youth work, and youth work infrastructure organisations. While this means that the organisations themselves are not homogenous, the youth work values underpinning 8 out of 9 of the practitioners would be shared (Batsleer 2010; NYA 2004; Sapin 2013). They had all completed a qualifying undergraduate or postgraduate training programme validated by the National Youth Agency and all met common practice standards. One of the participants was not a qualified youth worker (JNC) but was still included in the sample for two main reasons. Firstly, her experience in the youth sector was over six years. Secondly, I did not reject any participants who accepted the invitation (I had invited other youth workers who were not qualified, but she was the only participant who said yes). The participants included three senior managers/CEOs, and six face to face youth workers. Throughout the research, some people changed jobs within the same or different organisations, but all remained active within the youth work sector in some way.

Pseudonym	Youth Work qualifications	Gender	Sector	Role	Espoused Spirituality*
Brogan	JNC	Female	Education	Youth Worker / Leadership	Spiritual
Caitlyn	JNC	Female	Statutory Sector	Senior Youth Worker	Spiritual
Ewan	JNC	Male	Statutory Sector	Youth Worker	Not spiritual
George	JNC	Male	Voluntary Sector	Youth Work Co-ordinator	Celtic spirituality
Kate	JNC	Female	Voluntary Sector	Senior Manager	Not spiritual
Kevin	JNC	Male	Statutory Sector	Senior Manager	Not spiritual
Michael	JNC	Male	Voluntary Sector	Senior Manager	Christian
Peter	JNC	Male	Voluntary Sector	Youth Worker/Manager	Christian
Sandra	No	Female	Voluntary Sector	Youth Worker/Manager	Sikh

* It is worth noting here that this category is far more subtle than this.

Table 1 - Overview of Participants

3.6.6.6 Invitation to interview

The process for arranging the first and subsequent interviews then became personalised, but initially, all were contacted via email and then followed up via phone if they were hard to reach. Upon agreement of participation, I arranged a date, time, and venue for the first interview. The first phase of interviews was due to take place between December 2013 and February 2014. The interviews spread over that period and a few months beyond that. The participants completed the consent form when they attended the interview and could ask questions before signing this (Appendix D). Once the participants were engaged with the research, they were committing to taking part in three phases of interviews, looking at one of the research questions at each interview. Each phase could only begin once the previous phase was completed for all participants, the interviews were transcribed, and the participants had received the transcriptions to read and reflect on. Each phase took about six months to complete, 18 months in total.

3.6.6.7 Longitudinal narrative interviews

The use of interviews over some time was described by Elliott (2009) as being a component of using narrative approaches to research. While this is not the primary approach I am using for this research, I believe that the use of time is helpful in this interview process. Farr and Nizza (2019) identify longitudinal research in IPA to explore

change or transitions for the participants – traditionally within a health psychology but applied here for youth work. Within youth work, at this current time, there were substantial amounts of change, restructures, and cuts taking place and planned (Davies 2019). As I reflected in my journal, I hope to know:

> Whether youth workers' spirituality has an impact on their youth work, and more specifically in their change moments, e.g. job changes, organisation changes, promotions, working with different groups of young people. Underlying those changes, does spirituality affect the youth workers' resiliency to change, their own "stick-ability" in staying in change and as a manager, their "umbrella-ability" or protection of other staff.
>
> My data collection journal p 36

The use of phased interviews over a year was an appropriate method in considering spirituality and youth work with the changes taking place in the youth work sector during the data collection period.

3.6.7 The researcher and participants' data collection journeys

The first phase of interviews, discussing youth work practice at the moment, often ended with the interviewee reflecting on where they would like to be in the future and any changes they might be thinking about making. This focus followed by a three to four-month gap meant that the participants were able to forget the interview. Then the interview transcript was emailed through a week before the interview so they could revisit and reflect on it. At the start of each new phase, the interviewee was asked to reflect on the transcript noting anything that particularly struck them. This engaged the participant in the analysis and allowed for more validity in the research. They were able to check over what they had said and change anything they now disagreed with. For many, though, they were interested and pleased to have a record of their youth work career journey and felt that it was captured well in the interview transcript. See below for the researcher and participant experience of data collection:

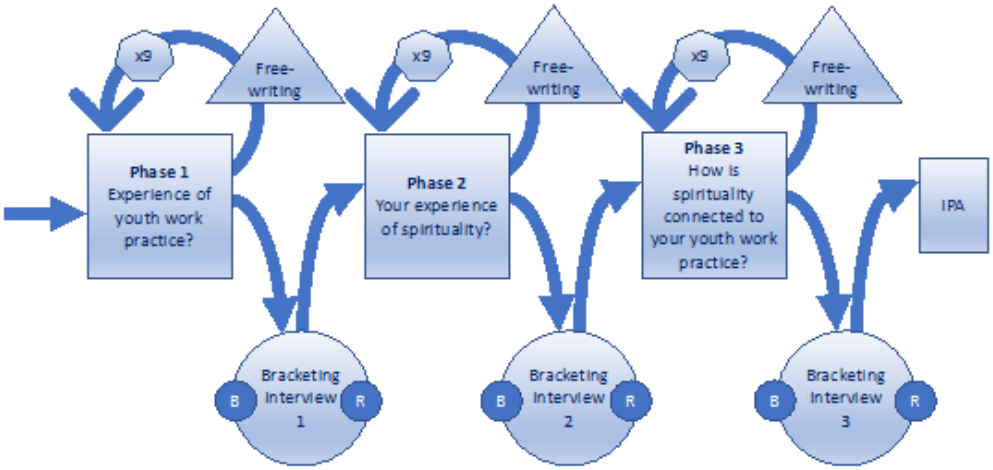

Figure 4 - The Researcher's Experiential Data Collection Journey

The use of phased interviews allows space and reflective time to see a change in practice or to see how work develops. Figure 5 below describes the participants' research journey.

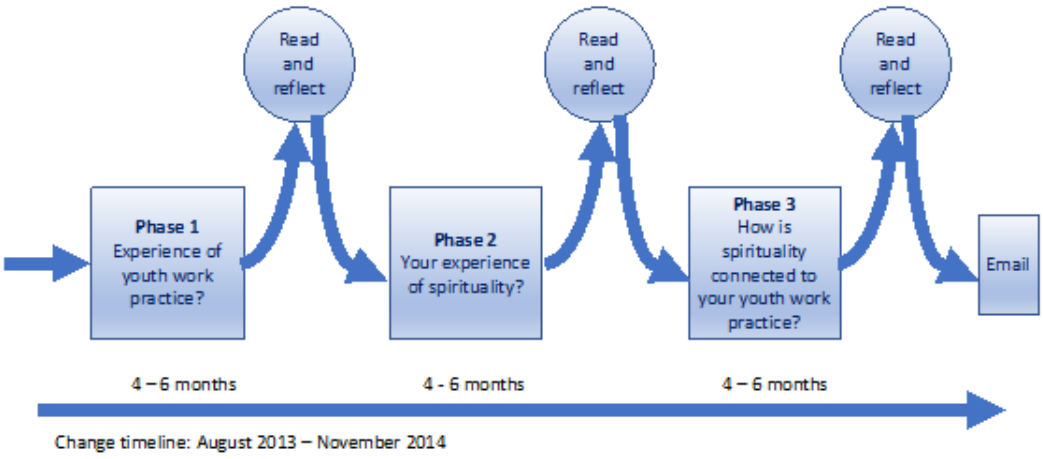

Figure 5 - The Participants' Experiential Research Journey

The process the participants go through could be described as a form of action research, in that they describe their experiences, reflect, act, and then come back and discuss changes they may have made (Coghlan 2019). However, this is not the point of this research; it is a by-product that was unanticipated with some participants.

3.6.8 Interview Process

To capture the experiences and detailed descriptions of practice, semi-structured interviews were conducted. A series of three interviews took place with each participant, based on Elliott's (2009) concept that narrative is a process and changes over time. The participants took part in three interviews across 18 months. The first interview took place either at the workplace, in an interview room or at Coventry University. Each interview took place for around an hour and was recorded to allow the interview to be transcribed afterwards. At the end of the interview, the participants were briefed that the written transcripts would be sent to them to check for accuracy, and to reflect on ahead of the next interview; they were asked to identify any themes they could see. When transcribed, the interview was sent to the participant in preparation for the second interview. They were asked to reflect on themes that emerged and bring these to the second interview.

The next interview took place in another three to six months' time. Following the second interview, the transcription was again sent to the participant, and the next interview would be booked. After the final interview, they were again invited to provide feedback on the final transcript, and this took place via email. The participants were part of the analysis of each interview at the next interview, drawing out key themes (Elliott 2009).

As described in the reflexivity and bracketing interviews section my process of freewriting after each interview and having a bracketing interview in between each phase of interviews was a concurrent practice; however, as this is detailed elsewhere, it is not repeated here.

This data collection was with youth work participants who were employed in non-faith-based settings: about how spirituality might have an impact on their youth work practice. It was felt that the research should be conducted in several stages or phases to build relationships with the participants and to work up to the main topic to be addressed about youth work and spirituality (Elliot 2009). The use of three phases linked well to the research question and objectives which could be divided well into three related, but differing, topics. This next section details the lead questions used describes the phases and briefly evaluates each one.

3.6.8.1 Phase 1 – What youth work is like for you at the moment?

The first phase was intended to build trust with the participants and introduce them to the concept, and practice, of semi-structured interviews, rather than a work-based conversation that we may have had together previously. Not only did the topic focus on the youth work practice that the participant was currently working in but looked into the past and explored the future career trajectory. All the interviews began in a comparable way as below, and then the participants took the lead of the interview direction and flow:

> Lovely. So hello, this is the first of three interviews, hopefully, and this one is looking at your experience of what youth work looks like at the moment; and talking about what your job is, and maybe how you've got here as well, and maybe looking into the future and where you see yourself heading. So, you can start wherever you like.
>
> (Lead question in Brogan's Phase 1 Interview)

This formed a useful baseline to work with, and in general, participants were pleased to talk about their youth work journey and jobs. Their youth work story is something that they were familiar with and was a good introduction.

The participants ranged from senior managers of youth work to those working more consistently face to face with young people. They all had at least five years' experience in the sector; all, except one, were qualified youth workers, meaning they had undertaken a degree, or diploma qualification, to become professionally qualified youth workers as validated by the National Youth Agency and the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC). There was a collective understanding of what youth work is, and a shared language used when talking about their current youth work role.

While in this first phase the interviews were officially semi-structured; but as recommended for IPA research the interviewer intervention remained at a minimum almost open-ended "maintaining a careful balance between guiding and being led" (Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez 2011: 757). In some cases, I simply began with the question: "Please tell me about your experience of youth work practice at the moment?" The use of small encouraging phrases was often enough to keep the momentum of the interview going, with a yes or an mmm in agreement.

> You just put the ums in, one little um and I launch into one paragraph of sort of recitation. Yes, it was quite interesting reading back, I thought. And any reflections on it now? I thought it reflected what I currently feel about myself, so you did it quite well.

(Michael 2: 16-18)

It seemed that while youth workers were able to speak about their experience of youth work at the moment having been in their jobs for a considerable length of time. Many of them had not had the opportunity to reflect on their career narratives in such a way.

> I just think at the moment the world of youth work is going so fast; I'm just keeping up and not having much reflection time.
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 459)

The use of the interviews in this first phase was helpful for participants and formed the basis of a trusting relationship with the youth workers before Phase 2 and 3.

3.6.8.2 Phase 2 – What spirituality means to you?

Following this first phase of interviews, the second phase began with a reflective question about the transcript the participants had read through ahead of this interview.

> Having had a look through the transcript of your last interview, are there any reflections or anything that jumped out at you or kind of made you think?
>
> (Reflective question in Michael's Phase 2 interview).

Following this the phase 2 lead question was beginning to focus on the second part of the research aim more closely; turning to the leading question "what does spirituality mean to you?" or in the case of George after he had responded to the reflective question:

> Um, brill, we'll move onto today's topic if that's all right. So today, what we're looking at is what spirituality means to you, and any direction that you take it is completely fine.
>
> (Lead question in George's Phase 2 interview)

It was expected that some participants might find this more challenging to answer, as often spirituality is a difficult topic to grapple with. However, all the participants were able to speak about the subject with, again, minimal interventions from the interviewer. I took this stance when approaching all the interviews; however, I did have a question crib sheet alongside if needed (See Appendix B). The second phase of spirituality questions was useful in gauging, where the participants saw spirituality concerning themselves. The idea was to focus on their spirituality, having looked at their careers, before finally focusing on the impact this might have on their youth work practice in the third phase of interviews. While prompts were again kept to a minimum in all the interviews, I introduced a definition of spirituality which depicted it as a connection to four different elements or domains: connection to ourselves, to others, to something bigger than us, and nature or

the environment (Fisher 1998). This was interspersed if the conversation dried up, after they had discussed the question for a little while, or if directly asked for my definition of spirituality.

During the second phase and partly in the first phase it was clear that some of the interview topics overlapped a little, as the participant was leading the direction of the interview this was fine and when asked they were reassured that what they had said was relevant and appropriate. The participants were keen to answer "correctly" to be the most useful to me and the research. In response to these overlaps, it was essential to be confident that the use of three phases did have three different foci and not merely a repetitive interview throughout the data collection. It would have been challenging to maintain involvement and continued motivation with the participants if this were too repetitive. This involved the interviewer planning the questions tightly at the start and before each phase and each interview, making sure that I was prepared and had a focus on the interview question for that phase.

3.6.8.3 Phase 3 – does spirituality have an impact on youth work?

The final phase was to address the impact their spirituality had on youth work practice, and in turn on the young people or staff whom they were working with directly.

> So, today's session, the final one, is a culmination of the other two interviews, and it's really about whether you think spirituality has an impact on youth work and what that might look like if you think it does, or if you think it doesn't, also, what that might look like.
>
> (Lead question in Kate's Phase 3 interview)

As each participant worked in different jobs, some of which were management and not involved in as much face-to-face work as previously, this would be interesting to look at it from that angle. It can often be challenging to address the impact of something and put that into words. The third phase of interviews aimed to be as accessible to the participants as the other phase of interviews.

> It has been nice to have time out to just reflect and think about that… there is a strong connection between spirituality and youth work for me, and it's nice to have the space to think about to feel safe doing it.
>
> (George 1: 75)

As per previous interviews, a crib sheet was used if needed. This was minimised, and the interview was directed by the participant as much as possible. It was necessary at this point for the researcher to not try and manipulate the direction of the interviews. As

this final phase was closest to the research question, it would be easy to see that the content of the interviews should be original and revealing. It may be, however, that they are quite ordinary and that the interviewees do not engage that well with this final topic and cannot see how their youth work practice is impacted by spirituality at all.

3.6.9 Staying bracketed

Following each phase of interviews, the bracketing interviews were helpful in preparation for the next steps and to "place on the shelf" any specific prejudices, experiences, or knowledge I had (Rolls and Relf 2006). While I will indicate what I kept inside the bracket, I will not go into explicit detail here. Examining the bracketing interview transcripts, I discussed: the impact of my own career journey, my choice of youth work training, my inclination to support people to consider their future pathways, my own redundancy experiences, my expectations of people's spirituality, the challenge of research spirituality alongside my own Christian faith, and my previous interactions with each participant in my practitioner roles. There were a few specific times when I reflected after the interviews about my struggle to remain bracketed throughout:

> His journey to youth work was fascinating and took a similar path to me geographically and thematically – I found it a dilemma as a researcher whether to interact or to stay bracketed.
>
> My data collection journal p. 20

Other interviews were less difficult than I had anticipated and the preparation that the bracketing interviews gave me helped me to be ready for what followed.

3.7 Data Analysis - Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

3.7.1 Introduction

This section will examine the use of IPA (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) as the data analysis tool for this research. The use of IPA follows six steps that guide the researcher into more in-depth analysis and interpretation of the participants' lived experience of a phenomenon: in this case, the youth workers' lived experience of youth work and spirituality. The six steps of IPA that I followed will be outlined below.

3.7.2 The research data – participants interviews

The research data to be analysed was the data from nine participants, over 18 months, with three interviews each. The three interviews were gathered into one idiographic case

to enable an analysis of each participant (except for one participant who had two interviews but was still included as interview two covered aspects of interview 3); in total there were 26 interviews for over 35 hours. Each participant had written transcriptions and recorded audio files of each interview.

3.7.2.1 Preparing the transcripts for IPA

IPA indicates to start with analysing one participant and then to move on to each other participant in turn. I initially decided that the order of the analysis would be based on the order that I conducted the first phase of interviews (see Table 2).

Order	Participant	First Phase	Second Phase	Third Phase
1	Michael	1	4	7
2	Peter	2	1	3
3	Sandra	3	7	2
4	Caitlyn	4	6	1
5	Kate	5	5	8
6	George	6	9	N/A
7	Kevin	7	2	5
8	Ewan	8	3	4
9	Brogan	9	8	6

Table 2 - Order the participants were interviewed

Ahead of the analysis, I prepared the transcripts by dividing each into three columns; the transcript in the middle as a wide column and space on the left and right margins to make notes and complete steps 2 and 3 of the IPA process. The left and right columns were left blank, and then the transcripts were printed out. My preference was to work from typed transcripts, alongside an audio playback device and to make handwritten notes in the other two columns. Each participant's reformatted transcripts were printed off and placed in a folder, ready to be analysed, and this was stored in a locked cabinet.

3.7.2.2 Length of time for IPA

I planned to spend up to a month analysing the first participant, as I learnt the process of IPA and repeated the first four steps of IPA, with the hope that the process would get quicker with subsequent participants (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). After completing Michael and Peter, I took a gendered and pragmatic approach and decided to finish off the remaining men's interviews. It is worth noting that during the analysis phase I found out I was pregnant again and so had time to analyse ahead of maternity leave, and after,

allowing much longer for analysis and greater opportunity to sit with each participant's interviews and *soak in it* again.

> It's just starting to properly dawn on me, that I will be doing my PhD very slowly with a baby boy on the way… I'm finding this so tiring at the moment. It's so hard to focus on it. I'm feeling weary and ready to be finished with all of this! The daily chip away approach is working well, though.
>
> My data analysis journal p. 69

Following maternity leave, I picked analysis back up with the women's interviews. The pragmatic approach was to choose some of the shorter interviews to analyse to increase the momentum of analysis; the task is repetitive and thorough but can be extremely draining. The actual order is shown in Table 3, with the length of time spent analysing each. As hoped, the analysis became faster as I developed my skills in IPA.

Participant	Interview lengths (minutes)	Analysis length
Michael	132.78	Two months
Peter	132.85	Two months
Kevin	108.80	One month
George	81.65	Two weeks
Ewan	108.52	Two weeks
Caitlyn	113.67	Two weeks
Kate	108.30	One week
Brogan	112.24	One week
Sandra	163.05	Two weeks

Table 3 - Length of time taken for interviews and analysis

3.7.3 The reflexive data – research journal and bracketing interviews

In addition to the participant research data, I was able to draw on the reflexive journal (Chan, Chien, and Fung 2013; Elbow 1973) and bracketing interviews (Rolls and Relf 2006) to support the analysis process. The data collection reflexive journal captured any reflections on the interview content (IC), reflection on methods used (RMU) and evaluation of research skill (ERS). Within IPA, a data analysis reflexive journal was kept, capturing any additional reflections. The three bracketing interviews allowed me to bracket off the known and unknown elements that may impact on data collection and analysis (Rolls and Relf 2006); this was transcribed to be used in the reflexive sections of this thesis. As the phenomenon of youth work and spirituality was explored with the youth workers, my interpretations utilised the double hermeneutic cycle (Smith, Flowers,

and Larkin 2009). Throughout the thesis, the reflexive data from my journals and bracketing interviews are drawn on as illustrations. Albeit the main emphasis on the participants' voice, staying true to the idiographic nature of IPA.

The next section describes the six-step process of IPA. Below is the graphic I designed for a poster (Bishop 2016) at a postgraduate research conference, outlining the six steps for IPA concerning my research and helps to visualise the process.

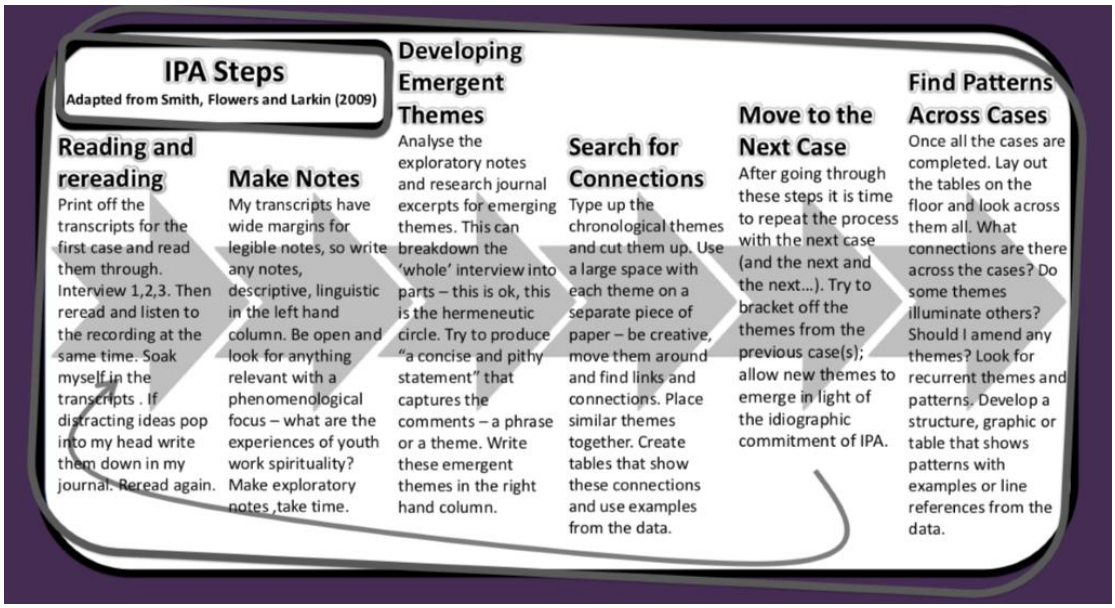

Figure 6 - IPA Steps (Bishop: 2016) - Visually applied from the text in Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009).

Each IPA step (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) is described and evaluated below. Visual examples of the IPA process are included to help capture the essence of the IPA process I undertook.

3.7.3.1 Step 1 - Read and reread

The first stage of the process of IPA was *reading and rereading* the transcripts (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). This helped me to refamiliarize myself with the data collected and "soak" in it. I spent time reading the interview transcripts for the first participant, and then reading and listening to the audio file to recapture the voice and the tone of the interview transcript. Some nuances were not clear when reading a script that came across in the audio files more clearly. I reflected on this process with my first interview:

I listened to Michaels first three interviews at home, in the car, while cooking tea, over two days – very useful to spend this long – it takes a while though as interviews last about two and a half hours. Listened is good as I can get other bits done…

…it takes time, and I'm not sure I'm doing it right, but I think the more you read/listen, the deeper it will get.

My data analysis journal pp13-15

This process of reading and rereading allowed me to remember the interviews and relive the data collection at that point. Each of the three interviews for the first participant was approximately 45 minutes. Therefore, this took the researcher quite some time to feel familiar with the material again. It was tempting to write notes on the script during this step; however, it was essential to resist this, and where necessary bracket this off in the data analysis journal. I often listened to the audio files in the drive to and from work, or on a walk, meaning I resisted the urge to write notes.

3.7.3.2 Step 2 – Make notes

Once I had spent time reading the transcripts repeatedly, I moved on to the next step, "Make Notes" (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin: 2009). It often took place within a café, as the preferred workspace, to allow focused time away from workplace distractions to read the script and make initial notes. IPA calls for the notes in step 2 to be made down one side of the transcript, in this case, in the right-hand side column.

As suggested by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) I analysed with three different lenses (descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual), when making notes on the script, to ensure that I explored the data in greater depth, rather than at a superficial level. Each was coded using a different colour pen, the descriptive notes in blue, linguistic in purple, and conceptual ideas in green. It allowed me to quickly see the variety of notes made and make comparisons throughout and across interview transcripts. For example, using purple for linguistic notes allowed me to quickly look for metaphors or repetitions used within the interview by the participants.

Initially, I read the transcript through and made notes in one colour at a time; as subsequent transcripts were analysed, I felt more confident to use three pens in one reading to speed up the process a little. My preference was to make notes in pen on the typed transcript whilst listening to the audio file. This enabled me to re-hear the subtleties

of the interview that may be missed through reading alone; the use of an audio file meant that the pace of analysis was in real-time, with some pauses to allow space to write lengthy notes if needed. It helped when I was feeling *stuck* with analysis as captured in my journal here:

> Note to self if you're feeling stuck just plug in headphones, get pens and start – the prospect is scarier than the thing itself.
>
> My data analysis journal p. 64

With a focus on the research question, the notes are described as initial notes to capture thoughts, descriptions and identify what the participant was trying to get at. The first participant was analysed using minutiae detail, and as the analyses went on, I was able to capture more concisely what the participant was saying in the interview. It meant that subsequent steps of the IPA process were less lengthy and unwieldy.

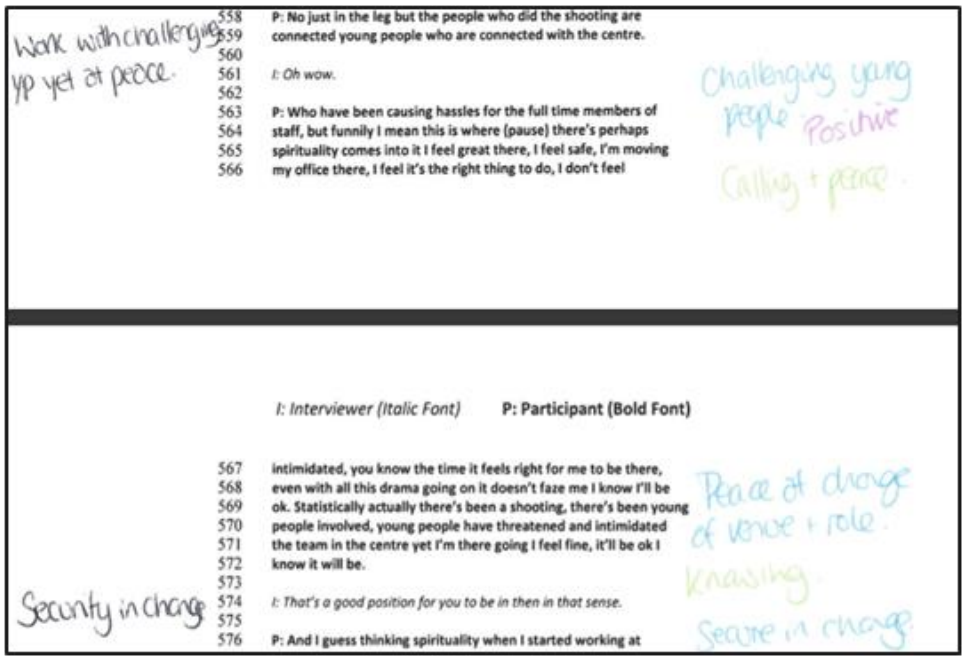

Figure 7 - Step 2 and Step 3 - Caitlyn Interview 2.

3.7.3.3 Step 3 – Develop emergent themes

Once the initial notes were made, I moved on to step 3 to *develop emergent themes* from the exploratory notes (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). The left-hand column was used for the generation of emergent themes that seemed to arise from the notes in the right-hand column. It was important to try to pinpoint "short pithy statements" (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) that captured the comments succinctly. In the first few analyses, I reflected on my insecurities of the new analysis technique:

> I do feel like IPA is a good process and keeps me going, but I think my lack of psychological vocabulary when defining themes is a weak area – I need to remember they can be amended as we go through.
>
> My data analysis journal p. 25

Step 3 seemed to be the most difficult, and I spent a month on the first participants' interviews completing this step. The emergent themes that were generated in the first participants' interviews were extensive, and as the process moved on, and I gained more confidence, it became easier to identify more concise themes. At this point, the notes on the transcripts were now complete and the grouping, and finding connections, could begin.

3.7.3.4 Step 4 – Find Connections

The fourth step is to group the emergent themes into an overall table, or visual image. The process I followed was to list each of the *Emergent Themes* in order and then to group them as connections became apparent. It was a messy process as I typed up the emergent themes in a list, printed them off, cut them out and moved them around a big table to find connections; It was a physically embodied analysis process (Todres 2007).

Then a mind map was drawn for each separate participant to illustrate the key themes identified. The initial list of emergent themes included a line code identifying the participant, the interview number, and the line (Caitlyn 1: 459). A table with quotes was compiled after the initial mind map which helped check for validity and depth of identified themes. After re-examining the mind map, a final participant mind map was drawn that captured the emerging themes. The data was then ready for the last step of the IPA process: to look for connections across all the participants. It was set aside until the final participant was analysed.

3.7.3.5 Step 5 – Move on to the next case

The 4-step process was then repeated with the next participant. It was important to come to each participant with fresh eyes and to bracket off the data that was previously analysed to allow for new themes to emerge for each participant. As this process was repeated for each participant it was refined and improved to help the data analysis techniques become smoother and faster. It included the use of different colour paper for each of the interview phases, which allowed the work of composing an overall map of themes at the end of step 4 much more straightforward. The use of a unique line code for each emergent theme made it quicker to look back at the full transcript and find examples from the participants' interviews for each theme.

3.7.3.6 Step 6 – Pattern across all the cases

Finally, step 6 involved laying out the overall mind maps and looking for themes across them. This stage seemed daunting and final; however, it was important to remember that this was an iterative process (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) that could be adapted and changed as the themes settled. The research aims and question helped to identify the most central themes that answer the research question. The overall superordinate themes generated arose from the emergent themes (Appendix E). Once the first attempt at step 6 was completed, this was shared with the supervisory team, a subject expert, and a conference where I presented my initial findings as an oral presentation (Bishop 2018 see Appendix H).

Using different methods of exploring these superordinate themes helped create validity. These were reflected in my journal, discussed with my team, and reviewed by other academics and practitioners at the conference. My supervisory team and subject expert suggested that I have one final bracketing interview before finalising the superordinate themes and constructing my findings. This bracketing interview allowed me to explore any bias or favour when looking for themes, and it helped me stay true to the data and avoided me pushing my agenda. After this bracketing interview, there was the opportunity to change emergent theme titles and the superordinate themes, with some emergent themes moving to rise to the top of the hierarchical framework. Once themes were generated, a table was created showing the thematic roots and evidence from extracts of transcripts.

3.7.4 Reflections on the research process

The participants each had reflections on the interview process the length of time between seeing each other. They were positive about the topic and the space to reflect. They described this space to reflect as spiritual in and of itself. The entire process of research data collection for some of them was a spiritual experience, as with Sandra:

> I've found it really enlightening, reflecting on what does it really mean to me, how does it influence my practice, how do I know, so I've found it a really useful experience.
>
> (Sandra 1: 541)

From my perspective as a researcher, I am pleased to see my development across the interview phases, from the first one where I reflected:

> This morning I was extremely nervous about the interview – I didn't feel prepared or confident in my recording devices – I couldn't cope with anyone talking to me or "being in my head" as I was thinking through everything I was going to do during and after the interviews – I even felt sick. I did eat breakfast, got up early, got a lift; but I questioned the point of my research, the worth of this first phase, and the delays in between each of the 3 interviews.
>
> After the initial stress, I got there on time – I'd decided to use Livescribe to record and also a Dictaphone. The Dictaphone is more obvious, and the Livescribe pen is more unobtrusive. Following the session, I walked into town and had breakfast – reward, calming and space to write that is nice.
>
> My data collection journal p 8

To later in the process where I enjoyed the interviews and the routine of visiting participants in their environments for interviews. The final phase was difficult, with maternity leave getting closer, and I reflected on one of the interviews:

> This week has been mega busy, and I only get things done with diary appointments – I felt my heart and head wasn't really in it – I began to question: so what?! How will this make a difference and are people still happy to engage with the process – they seem to be, so I think this is in my head.
>
> But the room was hot and sunny, and I couldn't concentrate. I felt conscience of my smiling, nodding, and listening – it didn't seem so natural and seemed quite tricky in comparison to regular conversations – there were times when the conversation rambled a bit, but I didn't feel I could jump in as that was against my ethos of letting things flow in the interviews.
>
> My data collection journal p. 32

This discipline of allowing each participant to lead the interviews and be non-directive was important. And as the interviews ended, I reflected:

> I would say the final phase is more fluid than the other two, and quite hard to negotiate as an interviewer, but ultimately is the point of my PhD. In today's interview, the final question of "does spirituality impact your youth work practice", to be answered as: "yes", was very exciting as she grappled with the topic and debate about youth work and spirituality generally, as well as giving examples. … I will be sad not to be doing this…It seems sad to be finishing interviews.
>
> My data collection journal p. 46

3.8 Conclusion

This methodology and methods chapter examined the theoretical perspectives underpinning the research. It elaborated on the choice of hermeneutic phenomenology and then the analysis technique of IPA. It considered my position as a researcher, especially considering my links to youth work and spirituality. It concluded that the practitioner-researcher identity is beneficial to this research and allowed me to recruit efficiently and to have interviews that produced rich data due to the preceding mutual trust. The longitudinal interview phases' design draws on narrative research, which allowed the youth workers more time to reflect and consider previous interviews, themes, or inaccuracies. The data collection methods, including recruitment, interviews, and transcription, are described. IPA's step approach is examined, and a new model is included to depict how the research was conducted visually. Finally, the ethical considerations are addressed, as are the limitations of this study. As seen through the model, the methodology utilised is an original contribution to IPA in a practitioner-researcher environment, specifically youth work. However, it is more applicable to educational research, where practitioner-researcher discourse is more commonplace.

Chapter 4: Introducing the findings

4.1 Introduction to the superordinate themes

This series of chapters within the findings section outlines the superordinate themes to emerge from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). The research aimed to see how youth workers' experiences of spirituality impacted on youth work practice. In total 4 superordinate themes were found:

1. Spiritual needs
2. The spirit of youth workers
3. The changing youth work identity
4. Redundancy induced loss

The first two focus on the research aim directly *Spiritual Needs* and *Spirit of Youth Workers.* The other two were repeatedly seen within everyone's interviews. In the superordinate themes of *Changing Youth Work Identity* and *Redundancy Induced Loss* there is acknowledgment through the individual experiences of the changing climate of youth work as described in the literature review. Table 4 shows the subordinate themes that are situated below the superordinate themes.

Superordinate themes	Subordinate themes
Spiritual needs	Spiritual self-awareness
	Seeking spiritual places
	Purposeful spiritual practices
	Connecting with others
The spirit of youth workers	The positive purpose of youth work
	Peace in your job
	The difference a youth workers attitude makes
A changing youth work identity	Becoming a youth worker
	Youth work professional identity
	Moving on and passing forward
Redundancy Induced Loss	The cuts
	Redundancy and death
	Personal coping with redundancy
	The loss response
	Planning for redundancy

Table 4 - Superordinate and subordinate themes generated through IPA

The IPA is from the data of nine participants (three interviews for each participant over an 18-month period (Elliott 2009) and the reflexive data from my research journal and bracketing interviews (as described in the methodology). This introduction to the findings initially addresses the research question and objectives one to three. The next section outlines how each of my three objectives can be found within the four superordinate themes (Table 4) that arose out of the IPA (a more detailed table of superordinate, subordinate and participant examples can be found in Appendix E). It is then followed by a *brief biographical sketch* (Anderson-Nathe 2010: 43) of the participants to give an embodied sense of each of the youth workers.

Following this introductory section, the four superordinate themes are presented in a traditional IPA format alternating the participants voices with my interpretations and referring to the themes within the larger superordinate themes (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009).

4.2 Recap of the aims and objectives

4.2.1 Objective 1 (Your experience of youth work at this moment)

This is explored first in this finding's introduction with a *brief biographical sketc*h (Anderson-Nathe 2010: 43) of each participant, in alphabetical order. The attention to the individual at the start captures who they are as a youth worker and briefly their spirituality. The participant's voice is preferred allowing each of them to introduce their youth work roles; it is worth remembering the participants generated their pseudonyms, and each quote is referenced with the participant pseudonym, interview number, and lines (E.g., Michael 2: 35-38).

The youth worker's experiences of youth work now can be seen within all the interviews as the contextual basis for each one. The idiographic nature of IPA (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) means the individual youth worker's experiences of spirituality form the basis for the overarching superordinated themes. The move from a single case to overall interpretation is the double hermeneutic of IPA and will be adhered to here. The superordinate theme a Changing Youth Work Identity links with the first objective. Alongside the firm underpinning of a youth worker's professional identity, was a self-awareness from each participant that the changes and cuts had affected their youth worker identities in some way. Youth worker's professional identity, that they each had trained in and had experience of, seemed to be eroded in some cases and in others

morphed into something new. Consequently, this superordinate theme encapsulates how youth workers see themselves in the changing youth work environment.

4.2.2 Objective 2 (Youth workers' experiences of spirituality)

The 2nd objective of youth workers' experiences of spirituality comes out in two chapters firstly in the superordinate theme: The Spirit of Youth Workers. That superordinate theme had three themes that came out of most participants' interviews: a positive purpose of youth work, feeling at peace in a job, the difference a youth worker's attitude makes. These three areas capture something of the essence of youth workers, and that makes them a productive and positive professional with young people. The Spirit of Youth Workers seemed to be within some of the participants already, and in other cases, they attributed their values development to their youth work training.

4.2.3 Objective 3 (The impact of spirituality on youth work practice)

The 2nd and 3rd objective are evident in the superordinate theme Spiritual Needs. Here youth worker's own spiritual activities and practices in their career and in practice with young people becomes clear. Most of the youth workers' spiritual experiences in professional lives are captured in the themes: spiritually self-aware, spiritual places, purposeful spiritual practices, connections with others.

The narrative of change, in the redundancy and cuts, evidences the third objective the impact of spirituality in youth work practice. The final superordinate theme Redundancy Induced Loss observed the individual experiences of the reductions through the themes: personal coping with redundancy, loss response, youth work managers response, planning for redundancy, and ending well.

4.3 Introduction to the participants

This section introduces each of the nine participants with a "brief biographical sketch" (Anderson-Nathe 2010: 43) that looks at their youth work job and their own spiritual identity. Table 5 identifies the spiritual and youth work characteristics of the participants including: the participants' espoused spiritual beliefs, summarises their work situation, relevant qualifications (especially the professional JNC youth work qualification), advocated spiritual practices, the venue for their spiritual practice, pressures of their work, and support they receive from others. All the youth workers were based in the Midlands of the UK.

The age of the participants ranged from their late twenties to early sixties. Michael and Kevin were reflecting on their career as it ended. The rest were thinking about their career security as they moved into their midlife. The stages of life may have impacted on the type of spiritual experiences, or religious history the participants may have had. A couple of the participants who had a more extended youth work history had a more reminiscent style to their account (Michael and Kevin). In contrast, the younger workers had a more positive and hopeful outlook for their future careers.

While the criteria for selection in this research was that the participant did not work in a faith-based setting, there were no exclusion criteria around personal faith, religion, or spirituality. The make-up of this within the participants was random. Kevin, Ewan, Kate, and Brogan described themselves as agnostic, atheistic, or no faith, even though two of those had a childhood religious experience upbringing. Peter and Michael expressed themselves as Christian, George as contemplative, Caitlyn as spiritual and Sandra as a Sikh. Peter, Michael, and George (all Christian) had experienced working in a faith-based setting.

	Brogan	Caitlyn	Ewan	George	Kate	Kevin	Michael	Peter	Sandra
Own spiritual identity	Agnostic	Spiritual	Not Spiritual	Left-wing social catholic	Not Christian	Atheist	Christian	Christian	Faith Sikh
Work situation (sector and job)	School-based senior management	School-based/ Local authority youth worker	Local authority - youth worker	Voluntary sector -youth housing manager	Voluntary sector -CEO	Local authority - Youth work manager	Voluntary sector - CEO	Voluntary sector - youth manager	Voluntary sector - youth worker
Qualifications	JNC BACP registered	JNC	JNC	JNC MA	JNC MA	JNC	JNC MA	JNC MA	MA
Spiritual Practices	Music, reflective moments Feed the birds	Energy, lights, stones, gratitude	Connections with others	Walking Words Nature Silence	Meditative running	Walking dog	Pray, bible community church	Pray, bible, reflection	Gym, Yoga
Spiritual places	Home, garden	Retreat, office, shower, youth centre	Pub, home	Retreat, nature, journeys sea	Home	Outside, moors, sea, camping	Snowdon Church, community, Taizé	Retreat, nature, church	Gym, home
Pressures	Caseload, school, Ofsted	Caseload, Cuts	Cuts, caseload	Cuts	Cuts	Leading restructuring decisions	Leading the restructuring funding	Funding, time, supervision	Caseload
Draws on support from others	Supervisor, Non-Managerial Supervision	Supervisor	Positive role models, supervisor	Mentors, supervisor network	Colleagues	Dog	Vicar, God, wife,	Past - Non-Managerial Supervision, role models,	Family friend's & manager

Table 5 - The spiritual and youth work characteristics of the participants

4.3.1 Meet Brogan

Brogan is based in a school as a youth worker with senior leadership responsibilities. She has a background working for the council in the statutory sector. She is agnostic but would say she is spiritual; she recognises spirituality has grown in her with age. In her maturity, spirituality shines for her. She pursues spirituality actively in reflection, mindfulness, and meditation. Brogan is keen to have space through walking or with music to reflect on the emotionally draining youth work that she does in child protection and casework.

> Since 2011, I'm responsible for Social inclusion and Safeguarding. So, I attend all the Child Protection Conferences; all the Child in Need, continue coordinating and delegating the CAF's and having an overview of those and the multi agencies. Organise a school nurse and her drop-in sessions, the Time for You counsellor; and the young carers and we've still got the same agencies coming in.
>
> And then, on top of that, I've been given full responsibility for sexual health services and teenage pregnancy. The liaison between the pregnant school-girls unit and the returns that we must fill in when school-aged girls become pregnant. For relationship and sex education to be incorporated into the syllabus and devised programmes and lesson plans. Meeting all the syllabus and curriculum requirements around, a broader area around PSHE and then narrowed down to the relationship and sex education, the RSE. So, I'm responsible for all of that as well, bringing other agencies in to deliver on that area. I'm also responsible for equality and diversity.
>
> (Brogan 1: 102-115)

Regardless of her job title, Brogan still calls herself *Brogan the youth worker.* To continue calling yourself a youth worker in every job role brings immortality irrespective of any changes or cuts. It brings continuity with meaning and purpose in a career that can be transferred to other jobs. This immortal identity resounds with the youth work values that she exudes; she lives and breathes it. Her professional identity is stable and secure. Budget cuts at the school have challenged her staffing levels and the location of youth work. Although, she advocates for young people, especially with family and school. Brogan feels that spirituality gives purpose to life.

4.3.2 Meet Caitlyn

Caitlyn is an experienced youth worker with a background in the voluntary sector. At the time of interviews, she was a senior youth worker based in a school, working for the local authority.

> I'm a senior youth worker that is presently based in a school and although it's classed as a school-based youth worker it's very different to the traditional school-based in terms of daytime delivery. The majority of work that I do is in the evening and community-based. In terms of community work, I was working with a community centre and neighbourhood action; but neighbourhood action has been disbanded due to cuts and the community centre has also stopped their children and youth workers post cos they haven't got the funding for it. I also would do detached youth work on a Friday evening there, so it got me to know other young people who don't access our service, community residents and pick up on different issues. There is a broad range of work that I deliver with a small team of part-time youth workers and volunteers.
>
> We run some after school sessions which are open to everybody, predominantly males attend it and we do run football alongside that. We also have a volunteering youth group where they do volunteer and fundraising and youth consultancy work in their school and the local community. We have a girl's group; we have an LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender] group; then we also have separate evenings for senior young people aged 14+; and a junior one which is aged 11 to year 9. We have a lot of young people who stay involved and are now young leaders.
>
> In terms of daytime provision, I work quite closely with the pastoral managers and the SENCO [Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator] and deliver one to one work around self-esteem, anger management, anti-bullying, anything that comes up really, young people get sign-posted to me. I do quite a lot of work around RSE work, relationship sexual education, we've got a condom service and we also provide community testing, I have quite a lot of students from the university.
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 19-45)

As the interviews progress, she is facing significant changes with council restructures in her role, and that of her team. Her position understandably changes from feeling reasonably secure in her job to be less sure of the future. She talks about her *gift* to *know* certain things, including changes to her job and with other people. As the interview phases progress, she moves from having empathy for management decisions to not being sure whom she can trust. For her, this is an unusual position and is leaving her feeling insecure.

Caitlyn is very spiritual; she talks about using crystals, stones, aura, and knowing when things are *meant to be*, she links this to a higher purpose. She has a daily ritual and routines that she feels clothes herself in positive and protective light and wants to extend this protection to her young people and staff. She talks about a youth centre bubble where she shelters them from the stress of the cuts and restructures. She feels at ease that this is where she is supposed to be – I interpret that as peace, but she does not

name it as such. She does not seem overly worried about her career path and has a deep-held belief that everything will work out okay in the end for her. Her sense of peace, or calling, *meant to be*, seems to help with this concept.

She does not initially recognise her work spiritually, but as she reflects, it is apparent it occurs naturally in her 1:1 work, residentials, supervision with staff and her career narrative. She describes *magical moments* as spiritual occasions in practice that are unplanned for, but in reflection have happened and deeply impacted young people, or her staff team.

4.3.3 Meet Ewan

Ewan is an experienced and qualified youth worker working for a local authority; he has survived several redundancy rounds. He describes his current youth work as follows:

> I'm a Youth Worker for XXX Council for targeted services for young people. Our work has changed significantly over the last couple of years with all the cuts we've had to reapply [for our jobs] twice in two years. We think we're safe this time, but that's obviously had a huge influence on the work that we've been doing. In the past we had about 30 youth clubs across the County, I work in XXX District, we've now gone to 5 [youth workers].
>
> The focus of our work now is mostly one-to-one work, but we also do group work; and the criteria for the young people that we're working with is NEETs [Not in Education, Employment or Training], or potential NEETs; people in care, or risk of being in care; getting people work-ready; and the other part is Members of Youth Parliament and participation work, which doesn't really fit in with the rest of the criteria.
>
> (Ewan 1: 1-10)

He wants to treat young people and colleagues well and hopes this approach will bring credit to his work, so people know about his excellent work by reputation. Ewan seems optimistic and has an excellent work ethic. He is a capable youth worker, and he describes his *lucky break* into youth work. This lucky break flavours his whole approach to career direction; he is not currently looking at other opportunities and feels that financial responsibilities mean he has his *hands tied*.

He uses a surfing metaphor of *riding the wave* and *gripping on* regarding his job and redundancy. He seems aware redundancy might reach him at some point, and he talks about his numbness to waiting for it.

Ewan would not describe himself as spiritual; he does not think spirituality impacts his practice. This seems to be rooted in some negative experiences with religion when he was younger; he sees a higher being as *not needed*. He is caring towards others and values connecting with people. He seems very person-centred in his approach to youth work. Even so, through all three interviews, he describes an inner struggle to connect with spirituality. Ewan sees spirituality as more about morals and values, not governed by a higher being, but by his own life experiences and his person-centred approach to youth work.

4.3.4 Meet George

George has a varied youth work history in the voluntary, faith-based, and statutory sector. He recently moved into a youth service manager role within a voluntary sector youth housing organisation. He describes his work there as:

> I found an organisation that had no idea, really, about working with young people; lots of conflicts within the staff and with young people; and a lot of young workers, unqualified workers who were suddenly thrust into leadership roles and then left to get on with it.
>
> So, I guess my approach has been to almost take a step back, and the work that we've been doing, maybe, hasn't been all singing all dancing work that was previously done, but it's sustainable. There's been a focus again around relationships, lots of small groups.
>
> So, as an organisation, we're looking at different ways to work with young people that are going to generate income. So, we've got some funding for a horticulture project; we're trying to develop a furniture recycling project. There's now a level 2 youth work project; there's a young leaders programme; there's a level 1 programme in place.
>
> (George 1: 12-20)

George saw his time there as limited, but he was trying to help the organisation develop its youth work expertise. After four months and by the time of the second interview, George had moved on to another job, where he had a renewed sense of purpose; he was less dissatisfied. He describes a lack of choice and control in his career direction within the youth work field currently, but he demonstrated peace about this and believes his steps are predestined, waiting for him to discover. He is trying to journey on the right path, even if he cannot currently see it.

George sees spirituality as necessary and describes feeling it in his walk to work. He has a community-based approach to engaging with others in spiritual conversations. He values solitude, silence, reflection, connections with others and nature; he aligns with

Celtic and Native American spirituality. George connected spirituality and youth work deeply and argued it is the same thing.

4.3.5 Meet Kate

Kate has experience working in mental health, housing, and volunteering in uniformed youth work. She is currently a Chief Officer for a voluntary sector children and youth infrastructure organisation, although her employer is a local authority. Her role is wide-ranging.

> I'm a chief officer of XXX, and our role is to support the voluntary sector and work with children and young people across the county. As an organisation, it's very bespoke, constantly evolving. So currently we've been doing a lot of safeguarding training that's being driven partly by new legislation: there are changes in DBS [Disclosure and Barring Service]; also, the work around child sexual exploitation. I work with a board of trustees that sets targets for supporting members; we have a Newsletter and weekly Bulletin and telephone advice. Trying to make people as informed as they can be, but also recognising our membership is so vast, so it ranges from national organisations, homeless, disability and then the more traditional Youth and Community Centres.
>
> So, I guess my notion of youth work is more about working with young people rather than youth work; and we support organisations that range from the traditional youth club through to those delivering very specific and specialised services, such as counselling.
>
> I sit on loads of partnership boards; the joint strategic needs assessment commissioning board, those types of things, the way you're representing the sector, questioning things that are happening and perhaps sort of advocating for sector in terms of opportunities for the force, in terms of them delivering services but also in terms of trying to negotiate with local onsite people, so we increase access to training and opportunities, looking at how we work smart together.
>
> (Kate 1: 15-34)

Kate came to the job initially through redundancy and is again facing regular cycles of cuts. She described waiting for redundancy as tiring and inevitable; she felt *up against a brick wall,* in terms of needing a salary to support her family.

Kate's childhood spiritual background was in the Christian tradition, but she made it clear she is not spiritual at the start of the interview. As the interviews went on, there is a greater acceptance that some early religious values are still there and impact her life and practice. She is keen to care for others, including family, staff, and young people. She seems to strive for peace, resilience, protection, and calmness and reflects on this to

young people. Kate recognises a training need for youth workers in mindfulness and meditation to teach these to young people as a tool for personal resiliency.

4.3.6 Meet Kevin

Kevin is a local authority youth services manager and has worked within various roles in youth work, including centre management, sexual health work, international work, youth work projects. He has been employed within this youth service for 20 years leading distinct projects every 2 to 3 years. His current role in overseeing youth service provision is:

> to ensure that we provide meaningful programmes and interventions for young people to enhance their lives and young people who have got limited life opportunities. So, it's usually my experience to coach, mentor, support other staff to recognise the challenges young people face…that's the nice bit of the job, all the other bits are about budgets and finances.
>
> I like the challenges the strategic part of it, but I still get the most rewards from working with staff, and the line management role, and support and supervision. We've got some great staff, who are fully on board, and are really dedicated to working with young people who have been dealt bad hands; and that will always be my drive, whatever I do.
>
> (Kevin 1: 212-218)

Kevin's childhood spirituality is Catholic, but decided atheism was more accurate to himself and *converted* as a teenager. Even so, Kevin connects easily to the term spirituality, his primary spiritual connection being with nature. He considers this as being a coping mechanism to counterbalance his part within the council restructures and redundancies. Kevin gets a sense of peace from walking his dog, being in nature, and reflecting.

4.3.7 Meet Michael

Michael, a voluntary sector manager, had two conversion experiences to Christianity (during childhood and adolescence), which seemed formational in his career direction into youth work. After working across the UK and with international partners, he has worked for over 20 years in his current workplace, leading a voluntary sector organisation. He describes his work in two ways: managing the charity and supporting youth work provision.

> The management element consists of supervisions, staff meetings each week, encouraging staff… looking at budgets… forward planning,

> funding, fundraising, working with the Board of Trustees. Trying to keep the show on the road, along with the wonderful staff team who do lots of work to do that.
>
> More recently I've got involved in things like setting up the Youth Project's and… supporting the workers there with bids. So, I'm getting out to clubs more, helping them with their ideas and their policies and getting their funding in as well as doing as doing some face-to-face youth work. I went on an international youth exchange, which was great just to get back to working alongside young people again which was good.
>
> (Michael 1: 59-68)

As a qualified youth worker, he sees the importance of reflection as a professional tool; and mentors to enable self-reflection and growth. However, he seems unable to fit this into his diary. He also recognises his professional growth could be compared to how his spirituality grows. Michael identifies there is *a valid conversation to be had* about spirituality and youth work, but for him, it has been "put on the back burner for so long" (Michael 3: 353).

Michael's primary spiritual dimension is his connection to others. His second most prevalent dimension is spirituality and God, but he speaks of a lack of time for his spirituality, although he has the intention to make time for it. He rarely mentions anything about nature and spirituality. However, throughout the interview, it becomes apparent that showing time, care, and consideration for others could be detrimental to his development educationally, professionally, and spiritually. The care and attention Michael feels burdened to fit in, could be seen as the pre-knowledge of the amount of time he needs to devote to spirituality and development. Michael explains: "I used to think, it's like a tank of petrol, faith or spirituality, and you'd run that right down, and then get a refill. I must be on the dregs at the moment" (Michael 2: 193) rather than do it an injustice he ignores it or survives on the *dregs* of his spirituality.

4.3.8 Meet Peter

Peter is a voluntary sector youth and family development manager for a community-based youth organisation. He grew up overseas and moved to the UK to develop his music skills and train in the UK education system. He has worked at the youth and community centre for ten years.

> We want to see the young people, see the area, and engage with them and get to know them. Then explore the issues, the real issues, because anti-social behaviour is a sign, the issue is much deeper than that. So, then we have used music so they like writing lyrics to explore that, what are the issues that young people face in this area. And what they say is, wow its mind-blowing, cos they say… ok child abuse, domestic violence, drugs, and then they list a lot of things. And then when I ask if you have to identify one which one would be the most important? They said child abuse.
>
> (Peter 1: 407-415)

He has a Christian lens to view his career path and feels at peace in his current role and direction. He values young people as active participants and has a growth approach to his work with young people. He values social action and community work. Peter's childhood spirituality was grounded in Christianity in a country that was vocal about spirituality in everyday life. He has daily spiritual practices that include prayer, bible reading and *pursuit of God.* For him, prayer is important as he makes life, and career, decisions. He has a positive outlook and is passionate about his work.

4.3.9 Meet Sandra

Sandra is a Young Carers Service Development Manager in the voluntary sector. She transitioned to this from being an Activities Co-ordinator. Sandra is the only participant that is not a qualified youth worker but has a youth work approach to her work with young carers and the staff she manages.

> All our service users are young carers, so obviously, all the young people we support have a carer role. We're funded by the Lottery to work with 5-18-year-olds, and we've secured a 5-year contract. I tend to say that there's mainly two types of support that we offer to young carers: emotional support; and respite, like day trips, activities, group nights etc. So, there's the activity side, youth work, and the emotional support side. I do miss not having so much interaction with the kids, you find you go into management and the responsibilities are just very different... it's more about sustaining, getting money in, all of that and I think cos times are so hard at the moment, getting money in is a key priority to make sure that we exist in the future.
>
> (Sandra 1: 23-45)

Sandra's faith as a Sikh was a motivating factor in her move to work in the voluntary sector and with young people. Her most active spiritual dimension is a connection to others and God, demonstrated in her commitment to working with others and supporting them develop. She has a positive, fun attitude and has ambitious standards for herself

and others, she is driven in her work life. Sandra is keen to encourage young people and staff to achieve their full potential.

4.4 Summary

This introduction to the participants gives insight into each of the youth workers' current roles and summarises the spirituality they talked about within their interviews. The following chapters illuminate each of the four superordinate themes from the emerging themes found in the analysis. They present the youth workers' experiences of spirituality and the impact of spirituality on youth work practice; and then the impact the changes, funding cuts and restructures have had. Each findings chapter takes quotes from individuals to illustrate the superordinate and subordinate themes evidenced in most of the participants' interviews; my interpretations then narrate these. The *Spiritual Needs*, the *Spirit of Youth Workers*, a *Changing Youth Work Identity,* and *Redundancy Induced Loss* are the four superordinate themes (see Table 4) and are interpreted in the following chapters.

Chapter 5: Spiritual Needs

5.1 Introduction

The concept of Spiritual Needs is explored in the two-part approach to the findings by addressing spirituality and youth work. Secondly, the change the cuts have made to the youth workers' practice and spirituality. Peter, George, and Michael were at ease with spirituality as a topic; this featured in all of their interviews. For others, they kept focussing on the subject for each session (Kate). All the participants were able to talk about the phenomenon of spirituality, whether they had engaged with it before or felt distant to it and struggled with how it related to them. Reflecting in my bracketing interviews about my preconceived ideas of their spirituality:

> I became more aware of it as I was talking to them. And they spoke about the experiences of spirituality they had. And all the while I was kind of silently, not shocked, but quietly interested in the differences of my perception of what I thought they might be like, and what they felt themselves to be like.
>
> Bracketing interview 2

In this chapter, the superordinate theme of Spiritual Needs is explored. It comprised of four themes: *Spiritual self-awareness, seeking spiritual places, purposeful spiritual practice, and connecting with others*. Each of the themes was examined using quotes and my interpretations under the overarching superordinate Spiritual Needs theme (See Table 4).

5.2 Spiritually self-aware. "For me, spirituality is…"

Each participant related to spirituality on a personal level. They were at ease engaging in self-reflection, and *awareness-seeking* of their spirituality. Professionally, the participants were not working in a faith-based setting or a religious organisation, but some had experienced those contexts earlier in their careers. The relationship between work and spirituality may have been a familiar concept for a few (Michael and George), but for others, this seemed to be the first time they had thought about it in a work context.

For Sandra, the interview process helped reveal, to her, just how much impact spirituality had on her career choice, and now work ethics. Her initial interactions show her personal spirituality is linked strongly to her faith:

> I have a faith, so I'm a Sikh, and I think for me: spirituality, religion, faith; these are words that are quite intertwined because I think they

> do influence or have some bearing on how you feel about the topic. But I think spirituality for me, is more about just … spirituality, I think it's about … connections, maybe that might be a word that I associate with spirituality … personally spirituality for me is something that…it means there is something bigger if that makes sense.
>
> (Sandra 2:31-37)

Sandra's faith formed a key part of her calling to working in the voluntary sector and with young people and she could see it was crucial to her initial start at work.

5.2.1 The journey of spirituality – "Open to exploring" (George)

Peter had faith, and as a Christian, he had a strong belief in God – his religion shaped his spirituality:

> For me, spirituality is a pursuit of meaning and purpose, and I believe that there is a creator and then nothing is random, that's what I believe, nothing is random. So, the discovery, the pursuit of discovering, who am I in that; and what does the relationship with myself and that creator - it's developing a relationship.
>
> (Peter 2: 11-15)

Peter and Sandra both talk about spirituality personally, as others do. They start off saying "For me, spirituality is..." This sense of ownership, but also a professional distance from proselytising their religion to young people, comes across when they say, "For me…." They are almost offering the professional courtesy of talking about the *taboo topic* of spirituality only because I have asked about it. Within the context of youth work, my experience, backed up in these findings, is that spiritual conversations are minimal. As a researcher/practitioner, knowing all the participants in advance, I know I have not had discussions with them about spirituality, in my practitioner role, even when I may have known or assumed any religious affiliations. However, I had conversations about spirituality with other Christian youth workers when I worked in a Christian setting previously. For me, having the title of *Christian youth worker* permitted me to talk about this with people, as the title of the researcher into spirituality has done. The conversation was different in that context, though, as here spirituality is defined much more broadly than being only located within one religion's viewpoint.

Peter, who's birth country had a societal norm to talk about spirituality, spoke fluently about his understanding of his faith:

> I come from a poor background, and I have people coming to my home country, from different countries, saying: "oh, I can see that you need

> God," but I don't need God because I have everything. For me, spirituality, or the pursuit of knowing God, is not about what I need, it's… I believe that there is a creator, I'm set to discover that. I think that's what spirituality to me is, the pursuit of discovering God and that creator, and what is my purpose here? If he created me, he created me with a purpose, what is that purpose? So, it's that relationship.
>
> (Peter 2: 16-21)

George had a background in church-based youth work but had moved away from that path and those religious affiliations. Like Peter, he saw this all as a journey of exploration and discovery.

> I think for me, one of the things I've found when I was working in that field, was that I struggled to connect a lot of definitions of what spirituality was. I guess on my journey I've, I don't know in terms of church or faith it increasingly didn't connect with me.
>
> I guess from a faith perspective. I sort of went on a journey from quite charismatic, angelic route, to more of a left-wing, social-catholic, meditative. I've always found sort of small groups or communities, that's where I find a sense of spirituality and being with people who are, I guess, open to exploring.
>
> (George 2: 29-40)

The connections with others, for George, is an essential element of his spirituality and his journey with them, be it young people, his mentors, or those he works with.

5.2.2 Valuing integrity – "I don't believe what's going on here". (Kevin)

The journey analogy for spiritual discovery is picked up by Kevin too. He describes his journey out of religion as a young person himself.

> My own personal journey with religion was cut relatively short, in terms of my life years. I was 55 yesterday, so it was over 40 years ago that I denounced religion. And I remember one specific day, the day I actually became an atheist, I was 14, and I came out of confession, and I don't know what made me question, but I remember walking along the road outside of the church, this very modern church and saying to my friend, I feel different…and I was getting to that age, almost 14, adolescent (a bit challenging on a number of things) and thought "I don't believe what's going on here", "I feel like I've been duped, but there's something not right about it." Then I went through a phase of being quite angry, and very anti-religious, and challenging everyone on religion, and not being very subtle about it.
>
> (Kevin 2: 118-125)

Kevin recalled this revolutionary change to his religious perspective. Interestingly, this key experience in his identity formation happened when he was a young person. Now

his role is to work with young people, youth workers spend time thinking about their experience of youth to be more self-aware in their work with young people. This spiritual experience for Kevin helped to form his adult identity and beliefs for himself.

The need for authenticity, integrity, and truth is a key value for Kevin. Brogan, like Kevin, can see when she began to think about her religion, or spirituality, for herself.

> So as a child, I wasn't spiritual, and I wouldn't have said that I'm spiritual. But, as a mature woman having gone through higher education and working in different roles, I would say that is where my spirituality has sort of grown and developed. I think it's more so now, since doing psychotherapy and hypnotherapy, cos a lot of that, we've done a lot of stuff around mindfulness and the here and now.
>
> (Brogan 2: 38-45)

She describes her spirituality as being "agnostic, but [would] not associate spirituality and religion together" (Brogan 2: 25). For her, the distinction between spirituality and religion is substantial. As she reflects on her childhood upbringing, she distances herself from it – but not in such an angry way, as Kevin remembers he did as a young person. Perhaps because she is exploring spirituality as a *mature woman* and able to consider it within the professional context of psychotherapy.

> I wouldn't say that I'm a Christian now, yes, I've been christened, yes, I was brought up as a Christian, but I'm not a practising Christian; but then I wouldn't be negative about it if a young person was working with me around whatever religion they are, if they have a religion. So, I think for me, it was about finding acceptance and acknowledgement that there is something more, and a purpose to life, but it's not about religion, it doesn't have to be based on a religious element…
>
> (Brogan 2: 80-89)

5.2.3 "A struggle" with spirituality (Ewan)

Ewan can see the distinction between spirituality and religion might be something to consider, but he struggles with the ties between them, that he has seen previously.

> I probably consider it more to be around religion and faith. So, with that in mind, I don't feel I've got a huge amount of spirituality personally, everyone's individual.
>
> (Ewan 2: 33-35)
>
> I think all my values and morals were more from life experience and sort of learning rather than faith and religion.
>
> (Ewan 2: 43-44)

> [Spirituality is] sort of just something that I struggle with and I'm not sure why, to be honest.
>
> (Ewan 2: 215)

Throughout the interview process, he continues to say he struggles with the concept of spirituality and what it might be, outside of a religious or faith-based, context. He recounts his struggle in the final interview – which is an isolated case in this research, so worth some attention.

> I think that I've harped on quite a bit about what spirituality means and my struggle to deal with it, which is quite bizarre, why I struggle so much. If I am spiritual, then I am, if I'm not then I'm not, but I seem to have struggled more to get my head around it, if that makes sense, as if it should have some greater, not significance in me, but just as a definition - to say: "well, yes or no"; but I'm not, and I seem to remember last time, when I said I was waffling, I mean I know now, but I think it's because I struggled with the concept of it.
>
> I'm comfortable with knowing that I'm not spiritual, and hopefully I've got a value base that's quite sound from hopefully always wanting to be professional, and from the influences that we've discussed before. And for people that are spiritual, and get a great deal from that, fantastic for them! It's just not my sort of thing. But if I'm that black and white about it, I don't know why I struggle. I don't know if that makes sense, but, if I'm on one hand saying I'm not spiritual and it's fine, I don't know, I'm not thinking that I believe differently, just in terms of the definition of a word or a phrase and that's quite odd, in terms of knowing sort of being comfortable with what I believe which I think I am, I just struggle to explain myself.
>
> (Ewan 3: 275-291)

When Ewan received his interview transcripts and could begin some reflection, this still did not help to clarify this or alleviate the struggle. In some respects, the struggle itself could be seen as spiritual, as there is some desire to engage further with the topic, rather than merely responding about what spirituality is to him and laying it to rest or being *at peace* with the decision. However, Ewan's identification is still with *not spiritual*, and yet the struggle remains.

Kate seems unused to speaking personally about her spirituality and reflects on the *deep* nature of our conversation. Rather than viewing it as a taboo topic, she sees it linked to a therapy scenario.

> I've got no belief in God or things like that, although everybody in my family has, so I am the cast out one… So I suppose for me what's important is sort of christian values with a little c. Also, in terms of spirituality, it's not about one or many Gods, or anything. That there is

> something right about living your life in a good way really, those sort of christian values; without being a Christian. That for me is what it's about, having integrity, doing what's right, considering not just the importance of yourself, but others and the community at large really…it's all a bit deep isn't it?
>
> (Kate 2: 13-22)

Kate, like Ewan, saw spirituality linking positively to values and a way of living, or rule of life. Yet she once again considers the family religion that she had distanced herself from and the concept of God as a judge.

> I guess I judge myself as opposed to feeling that there's a God judging you or leading you, or whatever, so I guess I'm quite a harsh judger…judger? I don't know what you'd call it… but I have a high expectation, and I'm probably harder on myself because of it really.
>
> (Kate 2: 50-55)

The concept that God is a judge does not sit well with Kate, and she transfers the judgment to herself and sets high standards. Caitlyn and Sandra talk about high standards in their interviews, but neither of them relates that to God. Kate places high expectations on herself and again this spiritual belief has a direct impact on her attitude to self. Interestingly, later, Kate talks about the idea spirituality with young people should involve an element of mindfulness, and one of the critical principles of this is the compassionate mind towards oneself.

Michael reflects on his spirituality, which he would identify as being Christian, and looks back on a time when he worked in a faith-based organisation. Spirituality was an essential element of the job.

> At the time it meant a lot more than it probably does now, which is very strange. It is something more than me; us as individuals exploring a greater horizon, thinking beyond ourselves even to a sort of belief in a deity but exploring beyond. So, you wake up in the morning the sun is there, a feeling of otherness to me, as an individual, I guess. I think that's probably it, what spirituality means and then it's a reflecting on it, so reflecting on why things happen and what things I want to happen, how they affect other people.
>
> (Michael 2: 54-63)

His conception of spirituality is about something beyond himself, and belief in a deity. His reflections are on life's big questions about why things happen. However, he then goes on to look at his spirituality and says:

> Do I wake up and think: Am I spiritual today? Probably not anymore no, and life gets in the way of spirituality.
>
> (Michael 2: 76)

Within his interviews, Michael often refers to the phrase: *life gets in the way.* This sense of busy-ness from work and other activities plays a big part in his spirituality. In his personal development, as he contemplates taking on a master's degree. It offers a feeling of lack of control over the situation, but almost a nostalgic look back to how it used to be when working in a faith-based setting. For Michael, this sets the tone for most of the interviews, almost a sense of loss.

Caitlyn feels, this same sense of connectedness, and she identifies as spiritual and accepts that, however she recognises others might be uncomfortable with it, and so makes some allowances.

> I kind of feel ok with accepting that I do feel quite spiritual and in tune and connected, and almost, just to make other people feel better I will say: 'I'm quite eccentric, or I'm a bit different'. And it's more about they feel better with the fact that I'm in tune with these things, rather than me feeling better about it, I'm ok with it.
>
> (Caitlyn 2:191-195)

Even though Caitlyn identifies as spiritual she considers the difficulties she faced as a youth worker to consider spirituality with young people; and its inclusion in the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (LLUK 2008).

> I mean it's about transitions, isn't it? Spirituality is a transition, and I think it's about looking at who you are as a person and developing as a person and, so I can see why it probably was in there. But I can also see why it's been removed.
>
> I always used to find it quite hard to demonstrate. How did you know that you'd done that to someone? How did you know that they'd had a spiritual moment…how do you know that someone's had a spiritual moment, because it's so individual isn't it?
>
> You know, a young person, who is 11, is going to turn around and say "that football, that was such a spiritual moment for me. When we won as a team." (Caitlyn 3: 107-111)

5.3 Spiritual places

Within this superordinate theme, the idea that the youth workers proactively sought specific spaces or places was prominent. For many, the spiritual attachment to a location or space was strong. Kate describes the benefits of spirituality:

> Spirituality is about being able to give people the space to be… I don't think it has to be about faith, but it does have to be about inner peace.
>
> (Kate 3: 133-143)

5.3.1 The spiritual need of nature

George here spoke about the relationship he had with a line manager, who valued the natural, and spiritual.

> He helped me open my mind a wee bit to what spirituality could be, and you know, we used to spend lots of time walking, we used to spend lots of time getting close to nature, lots of time around I guess being creative, like when we did supervision, we'd go to the sculpture park.
>
> (George 2: 47-50)

For George, this linked strongly to his spirituality, as he described himself as a traveller. Having a supervisor who was able to connect with him in this way, proved supportive for George and helped him to explore his spirituality too.

> Maybe a traveller, I always like reading Paulo Freire books. It's very much that sense of discovery and never having made it, you get new thoughts, ideas, or conversations, that's what inspires me, sustains me.
>
> (George 2: 155-159)

The sense of creativity is something he can find in that particular space. Later George goes on to talk about his commute to work as a spiritual opportunity where he can reflect, be creative in thought and use silence to *inspire and sustain* himself. Kevin has an awareness of his own needs, spiritually, in considering how to care for himself. Kevin talks about the importance of the outdoors as part of his spiritual needs.

> I was brought up by the moors and by the sea, and I loved the hilly landscape, and I love the sea, [this area] is impressively flat… It couldn't be further from the sea, so it had all those things going against it, but interesting in terms of my spiritual needs those were the really important things as well to me and so, but the jobs have been, and the roles have been attractive enough to keep me interested, and I developed.
>
> (Kevin 1: 132-144)

Kevin described himself, similarly to George as being on a *journey* as a *traveller* and *rootless*, due to moving a great deal when he was younger.

5.3.2 Creating space through walking – a meditative, rebalancing activity

Kevin sees his compromise living in the Midlands, which is away from the sea, as part of his journey. He makes sure to incorporate the outdoors wherever he lives. With the daily rhythm of walking his dog, as his way to recover from work and being mindful.

> I think one thing that's essential to manage, and I have this with all the staff I manage, is: "yes work is majorly important, but it isn't everything, and you've got to have a balance." I don't just mean about taking time out, but working out what ticks your boxes… And that for me, is a critical part of my identity, my work is the bit that I'm very fortunate, I've got a job I love, millions of people haven't, and I'd be really sad not to do it, but I've done jobs that I don't enjoy, and I can do that again, but that's because that's my other life that I enjoy, but it doesn't cost a lot, my other life, walking the dog, that's my thing.
>
> (Kevin 1: 400-410)

He still tries to maintain time away in the outdoors as well as that daily rhythm. His sense of knowing himself comes through strongly here. It is reflected in his attitude and lack of anxiety for himself concerning the job cuts. Relating the daily rhythm of dog walking as *not cost[ing] a lot,* links to the conversation around redundancy and cuts. Kevin's awareness that even without a job, and much financial security, he would still be able to take part in that activity for his spiritual needs.

> My spiritual[ity]…the time I'm at one with things around me is when I'm away from all that…going camping, or just out and about, or walking by the canal, and yesterday in fact… things like that just make me feel good to be alive.
>
> (Kevin 2: 273-276)

He continues to feel opposed to religion but describes the sense of spiritual well-being as overwhelming, when outside and in nature. This contrast to the job and pressures felt daily is vital for Kevin to rebalance himself.

> It feels often like [Spirituality is] owned and monopolised by faiths and religions. To me, it's different to that, and it's different because I have a sense of well-being, at times, that can be overwhelming. And it's not easily explained, and it can be about my connection with things, probably just to do with nature and being outside; whether it be by the sea or countryside, and a connectivity with the planet and things around me, that are far removed from pressures of consumerism.
>
> (Kevin 2: 55-65)

His sense of peace at his spirituality is like that of Caitlyn's; regardless of what other people think, it is an individual connection for him that sustains him:

> It's not something I spend a lot of time thinking about, but I feel I suppose I come across as I do when I'm asked about it which I suppose makes me feel okay because I have a strong sense of what it means to me. Maybe the things that make me feel alive and good, and connected with the planet, I term as spirituality. And other people might question that, but that's sort of okay with me.
>
> (Kevin 3:17-20)

For Kate, she can see the benefit of spirituality for young people and in particular the use of meditation; her reflection is on the trance state of running, and its comparison to meditation.

> I'd be very interested in how we can support young people to meditate and things like that, because that notion of finding peace, you know whether is higher being or something you set in that space. I think we are very poor at creating opportunities. I've read quite a lot of stuff about the benefits, although I've never managed to meditate. The closest I've ever got is through running because I think then you're going into a semi-trance, where you…can't do it with my knees now, but that gives you a sense of well-being and having space within your head just to be… …just sort of rhythm and stuff.
>
> (Kate 2: 152-166)

Although Kate identifies that as a past habit, she shares the benefit of it. She focuses on the use of meditation to attain peace, which she does not feel as though she has currently.

5.3.3 Retreat. "To go and be revitalised" (George) in a "completely different atmosphere" (Caitlyn) "spending time apart from daily life" (Michael).

For some participants, spiritual connections happen in retreat venues away from their everyday life. George describes the sea as a place where he would engage creatively with spirituality and, in his experience, this through organising retreats for other youth workers.

> I guess that's how I see spirituality, it's very creative, it can be very like when I go to the sea, that is my sort of…I don't necessarily like using the words, God, but that is a spiritual experience for me.
>
> (George 2: 60-61)

George continued to reflect on the detail of quarterly retreats and the benefits for himself and others.

> It was a place that if you wanted to go and just sleep you could do that; they had people who were qualified counsellors, would just be there if

> you wanted to go and have a more in-depth conversation with a therapist.
>
> They had a beautiful wee chapel if you wanted to go and be still; they had a programme that had prayers, so if you wanted to engage with that. They had an old library, thousands of books where you could just go in; and they had a beautiful garden that actually had some goats.
>
> They had people who would come volunteer for the year, work in the kitchen, all the food was homemade it was fantastic. It was just a real opportunity to go and be revitalised, but also then get together with people as well, get to know them and share.
>
> (George 2: 60-85)

The repetition in this long paragraph about the detail of the retreats was a reminiscence and reliving that helped George to recount what was particularly useful for him in that time. Interestingly, this happened a while ago and it seems that the retreats were key spiritual moments for George, it is unclear if he still takes time to do this now.

Many of the participants discussed the spiritual importance for them of getting away from everyday life. Here, Caitlyn has a similar experience of the retreat, within a music festival. How she felt returning from Glastonbury, was like the experience that George had. She found a quiet and contemplative environment within the music festival.

> Funnily enough I went to Glastonbury, and I came back from there so relaxed, you'd find it a bit bizarre really, you've gone to a music festival, it's quite crazy and chaotic, but we were in disabled camping (because my friends in a wheelchair). It's a completely different atmosphere; it's a lot calmer, it's a lot quieter. We were able to go and enjoy ourselves, but also come back and just be without anything.
>
> (Caitlyn 2: 401-405)

Caitlyn's sense of calm was challenging to maintain, and she talks about the benefits of the retreat. But, regardless of this struggle, the value of retreating is still an important contrast to the daily rhythm of work. The benefits of being in a different, but individual, space was significant.

> I came back just feeling really calm, so for the first week at work I was really calm, these past few weeks since then I've not been as calm, and I keep trying to think about: ok remember how it felt, just go back to that feeling, and it's quite hard, but I'm trying to be calmer.
>
> I definitely took something from that. How I was managing things, just things didn't faze me as much, and I'm trying not to be fazed, but there's a lot going on at the minute just fazing me.
>
> (Caitlyn 2: 406-419)

That sense of coming back down to earth is an integral part of maintaining and sustaining for the participants, and the recollection of the memory of another time is important. For Michael, space is imperative and being away from the daily routine in nature and through a retreat came up again.

> There's sort of the otherness, the being… being quiet, thinking, reflecting. I suppose there are places where I've found spirituality. I mentioned the top of Snowdon and all, but the whole Taizé experience… I very much found the silence at Taizé, and the community there, and reflecting and spending time apart from daily life, and in that sense, retreats are quite good.
>
> (Michael 2: 104-110)

Brogan talks a lot about the importance of space and venue within her work context, especially when she recalls the moment when the *ceiling caved in* on a student sat in her office, surrounded by building works. For her, that sense of safety and space is important in her practice, and after work, in her self-care and reflective time.

> I have moments of reflection myself when I go home, and just zone out completely. I reflect on the day or reflect on a conversation I had with somebody last week. I try and have reflective moments. I try and have times, it's not meditation, and it's not self-hypnosis, but it's times where I can just…it's more about mindfulness, the here and the now. Where I am and appreciate things around me. And clearing my head of all the shit that's gone on.
>
> Actually, thinking about things and putting more thought into it: "why did that happen, and when I had that conversation what sort of a day was that person having, they were a bit rude to me, I was a bit pissed off, I'm glad I didn't send that e-mail" …
>
> So, I protect time like that, and that's generally… I take my dog for a walk, or I'll sit in my bedroom and just put on some nice calming music, and I know I'm not going to be disturbed. My mobile phone will go off so that I'm not disturbed, and I just have that time which I think is really important, especially in this sort of job, it's that time for me.
>
> (Brogan 2: 190-202)

Brogan's sense of reflection for her resembles mindfulness. The reflective spiritual activity around observing her day as well as what is happening in the here and now. She protects her spirituality within her day but prioritises venues that are close and easily accessible: in her home; walking her dog. Brogan's spiritual rhythm is like Kevin's, and the need for nature can be seen in a routine of appreciating the birds in her garden.

> I feed the birds every single day at home, I love watching the birds, often when I'm having my time then I can be sitting in the garden just

> looking at the bird feeder, and everything else would be out of my head, and I would just be looking at the birds coming out of the bird feeder.
>
> (Brogan 2: 315-318)

Taking some reflective time in her garden each day could be compared to a spiritual retreat, in the here and now. Brogan prioritises removing herself out of the present stress and worry to a retreat at home which is always available. Brogan does not naturally associate spirituality with the environment, but when exploring it, she describes the birds and the meditative nature of watching them go about their day. Every single day she feeds them, unlike the practice of reflection which she cannot do daily but tries to do weekly.

> So, I think on every level really spirituality for me is quite a valuable tool, and quite powerful as well because it gives the holistic, the bigger picture.
>
> (Brogan 3: 120-121)

5.3.4 In nature with young people

As the youth workers take time to reflect and demonstrate the use of nature, they describe the use of different environments with young people in their youth work. This is best shown by Caitlyn who reflects on *magical moments* in youth work.

> I think you can get like these, kind of, magical moments that are fairly, what I would say, "a spiritual moment." When you are in tune.
>
> So, I always like to take young people to a big park near the centre. And there's something about that place, that whatever age group, they just run free, and they do just run free you know. if I could take them to [another park] and it's not the same. But take then to [this Park] and it is just like, they're just free, and they're in with nature and they can climb up the rocks and I just have to turn my eyes away.
>
> We go up the top to the lookout point. And as we walk along there is a war memorial there, and it was quite significant because it's 100 years since WW1. So, we had a moment. All the young people and the workers just had a moment. Reflecting on what that was like and what that was like for people. Reflecting back on what war was like, so I guess that's quite a spiritual moment.
>
> (Caitlyn 3: 50-66)

Caitlyn is clear though that this cannot be necessarily planned for.

> I'd never go right we're going to get some spirituality out of this situation, no I think that just, it's just like, you know, the *stars all collide and boom* it kind of happens, I don't think you can't always plan for

> those things, you plan for a certain outcome but no, I don't think you plan for, I don't plan for spirituality.
>
> (Caitlyn 3: 92-94)

Whilst Kevin considers the experience for young people in nature:

> An outward bounds place, out in the middle of nowhere type of experience for young people can be sort of invigorating and can impact on the in a way that other things haven't impacted on them.
>
> And they may not see it as a spiritual experience but to me it falls into that. It's about having a different relationship with the world for a while.
>
> (Kevin 3: 62-68)

5.4 Purposeful spiritual practices

Along with the concept of spirituality being linked to space, the theme of spiritual practice came up regularly. All participants spoke about their regular spiritual practices, even those who did not identify spiritually seemed to have a connection to this theme. Most were able to talk about the reflection opportunities they had within their practice, and many linked this directly to spirituality, as Brogan did earlier. There are more specific spiritual rituals that some people consider every day. Caitlyn talks about her use of crystals within her work environment.

> I think it just helps me think about the impact I have on others, and if I am getting a little bit stressed, thinking about what can help me you know try to be a calmer influence. And especially when you're working with people, you know, you have a big impact on people, I quite like crystals as well, so I have crystals around me, and I have them in my office.
>
> I: What do you do with them?
>
> C: I just have them in the office around by the computer because that's not great energy really. And the office is quite a formal space, and I don't look at them all the time, I kind of just put them there. If I'm not feeling as positive as I need to, I might get some new ones.
>
> I: How do they relate to you?
>
> C: I mean they say stones have different meanings, so I tend to pick stones that I quite like so amethyst, rose quartz, clear quartz they're all quite good for healing, cleansing, and healing and positive ones for clarity and things like that.
>
> (Caitlyn 2: 113-136)

Her focus on protection around herself and others, mirrors her conversation about a protective bubble she tries to surround her staff and young people with each day in

response to the cuts and restructures in the local authority (this is examined in the superordinate theme Redundancy Induced Loss).

5.4.1 A spiritual start or end to the day

She talks about her spiritual routine of surrounding herself with light each day when getting ready in the morning.

> I do feel that there's something out there that I feel fairly connected to, but I don't know what it is, and I guess that kind of guides me. I'm into a sort of energies, and lights and stones, and things like that…
>
> I guess, you know, say people have auras, and picking up on that, and also, I'm into white light as a protection and as a guide, and also blue light protects you from negative energy. So yeah, cos I'm a fairly positive person, and I want to keep that. And I'm aware that there are people who aren't so positive and will zap you of that energy, so you kind of has to look after yourself.
>
> I surround myself with white light and a shroud of blue light, every day I do that.
>
> I: How do you do that…what do you do?
>
> I shower. When I shower, when the waters washing over me, I kind of have like this mantra, and when I do that, I surround myself with it.
>
> (Caitlyn 2: 48-83)

The awareness of her spirituality here seems high, and she has identified spiritual patterns that are related to the negativity and cuts around her area of work. They seem to help to protect her, which she then, in turn, tries to do with others. Caitlyn is the only person to talk about spirituality in this way, and she reflects herself that when she has spoken of this, especially when colleagues have seen her crystals, there have been a variety of positive and negative responses towards her. However, from her perspective, this is a crucial element of her work and balancing herself each day. Having a starting routine at the beginning of the day seems an essential factor here. Like Caitlyn, George has a daily spiritual starter in his commute to work:

> I've started… since I've started my new job and I'm travelling down to London… I've got a wee book, and I just think of almost like a word for the day, then I try and find some quotes to reflect on. The word sort of emerges really, and I guess a lot of that would be about things that are going on, whether in work or whether I'm my personal life.
>
> I think that's one of the things that when I use silence that allows things to come into my mind. I use that… I mean sometimes I will share with other people. I think one of the things I like to do is encourage people and I also like to make people think as well, I'm also hoping that that

> will be reciprocated as well ‘cos I like to find out what’s in here for other people. And again, that’s the beauty of having journeys; you can get a wee bit of time to…reflect.
>
> (George 2: 98-120)

The idea of fitting in regular reflection comes up throughout many of the interviews. As a spiritual start, George talks about the use of the early morning commuting silence to focus his thought on a particular word; this then accompanies him throughout the day. Sandra takes the opportunity for reflection at the end of particularly stressful days by exercising her body, and in turn, relaxing her mind and getting *back to feeling ok*.

> I try to internalize it and then I suppose for me part of that process is after that supervision. I think I'm very professional, in that I'll deal with [my supervisee] and ask him how he's feeling about it.
>
> But then, I then take the time to reflect on it myself and think well actually today's been quite a heavy day. Whether that means, you know, go to the gym or you know practice some yoga or something, I know that I need to do something to get back to feeling just ok about stuff.
>
> (Sandra 3: 70-71)

For Sandra, the end to her day and practicing yoga is crucial to going back to feeling ok. In the same way as Brogan described earlier her mindful moments at the end of the day to reflect on how the day went. In her bedroom, dog-walking or listening to music. The idea of completing another activity and reflecting at the end of the day seems helpful in winding down.

5.4.2 Using prayer, gratitude, and mindfulness to grow resilience.

For Peter, his faith as a Christian means that his spiritual practice is around daily prayer, more like conversations with God about his work situations. In one case during particularly stressful events at his organisation Peter felt that he should pray about a challenging work issue, he said God listened and changed the situation, and his manager resigned.

> And I thought wow! I wasn’t expecting that, but I prayed, and I believed that God did something here. So, she said, “I’m leaving.” And then that was an interesting thing because for me it was God saying stay here, don’t leave.
>
> Then we started a process of ok what is next…. then God started doing something in my heart; in terms of, I started reflecting. I felt God was saying it’s you and then in my flesh, or in my mind, I was thinking, “I’m not able to do this, I don’t have the right skills, the ambition to be the director, I don’t have any of this I’m afraid of the responsibility.” But

> then God said, “it’s you.” Ok, how do I respond to that now? And then I spoke to a few people.
>
> And then I said, “ok,” inside of me I was like I don’t want to do this, I don’t think I have the capacity to do this and that for me is the battle between what God said and what I think of myself.
>
> Yeah. And that was having a conflict inside of me; then we had a trustee meeting … I think ok I’m going to take the responsibility I was saying I’m ready to take the responsibility and then what I did, I suggested… (this is quite unique I don’t think you can do much in many places) I wrote the job description!
>
> (Peter 2: 106-152)

The next few weeks involved Peter coming to terms with what he believed God's plan to be, and to take his part of fleshing that out in a job description for a new role, which ended up being him. He is convinced that this has reaffirmed that God has a purpose for him in this setting.

> So yeah, some people if they don’t engage with spirituality, they will just say “it’s a very nice coincidence, that’s great,” for me, it’s not random at all, it’s not a coincidence. If I [had] not pursued the job… that for me, it doesn’t matter at all; it’s more like ok there is a purpose. God put me there for a purpose, and I want to discover that.
>
> It’s a bit uncomfortable because my flesh is saying you’re not able, who are you to do this? But then God is saying, “you’re more than a conqueror” and “I want to walk with you and take you on that journey.” So that is what spirituality is for me, and how that impacts my day-to-day life.
>
> (Peter 2: 195-200)

The spirituality of the start of this new career path for Peter was a spiritual intervention, where his belief and spiritual activity of prayer changed the situation that he was in. Then Peter took on the responsibility for the job and its development. The idea that spiritual belief has an impact on the situation again comes up here, and for Peter, this is a validation that sends him off on his next path in his career.

Returning to Caitlyn, who captures many of the themes succinctly, she describes the value of gratitude in practice. Her attitude of appreciation of opportunities that arise in youth work practice aligns with Peter's prayer that changed his situation. She advocates taking up opportunities when they arise and appreciating life.

> It’s looking at the tiny things, as well as the big things. And just being appreciative of things. You know, I just see so many people, who are always not happy about this that and the other. And actually, I’m really lucky; I’m really lucky! I’ve got a stable life; I’ve got a good partner.

> Yes, the jobs busy, but I love it, and at the moment I've got one. I love working with young people; I love working in the community. I've got enough money to do what I need to do with; so, I just feel really grateful for all of those things really.
>
> I guess that's part of spirituality, you know, looking at what you've got and appreciating it. And you know if you want things to change, you've got to make those things change really, and take advantage of those opportunities that come up. I've always been someone who is about taking advantage of opportunities that are given to you; 'cos they don't come around all the time.
>
> (Caitlyn 2: 170-182)

Caitlyn's spiritual attitude of gratitude aligns with Kate, as she describes the value of mindfulness when working with young people.

> I think it is absolutely key in youth work to support people's development, in terms of their spirituality, because I think that is about their self-esteem, where they see themselves in society, within their own community, within their family.
>
> That's sort of a mindfulness approach to it really, and I think that we need to start teaching that to young people. Teaching people to embrace some notion of spirituality that creates a sense of who people are and allows them to be and grow and learn.
>
> That has to be a good thing and by doing that you become more resilient.
>
> (Kate 3: 154-156)

For Kate, this is a solution for young people's mental health issues that arise over the years. She believes that the practice of mindfulness can create a *calmness and sanctuary* which helps *build resilience* in them.

5.5 Connecting with others

The final subordinate theme, within this more substantial section of Spiritual Needs, is the importance of connecting with others. Be it supervision of youth workers, connecting with colleagues, or the relationships with young people, all the youth workers talked about the value of others. Supervision and reflection seemed key to having a successful career in youth work; the importance of mentors outside of organisations was also recognised.

5.5.1 Using supervision to balance the 'hard times' (Brogan)

Brogan talks about her need for supervision and the school's response and provision for that:

> I occasionally have a little meltdown, a little outburst where I'm ranting at everybody, and it's almost like, get it off my chest, and I just settle back down again.
>
> But it is hard at times, but I think I deal with it, I use the support that's around me, the school will buy in support and supervision for me which they do every half term, if I want it more, they can increase that.
>
> (Brogan 1: 204-212)

A purposeful attitude comes out here, with a proactive approach to making sure that she can process the tough nature of her role. For her, the balance of needing support herself, so that she can then, in turn, support the young people she encounters, is crucial to delivering sustainable practice, without burning out.

> I think, within my job, I always go the extra mile with the young people. And the day that I stop doing that is the day I need to reflect on my career; whether or not I'm the right job. But I'll always do that, and I'll always put my head above the parapet, and I'll always challenge inequalities and fight in the corner of the underdog, so to speak. Which is generally the child that's being screamed and yelled at or punished.
>
> (Brogan 2: 270-279)

Along with the theme around spiritual activities being in particular spaces or environments, the concept that spiritual practice happens in community and with others came through powerfully.

5.5.2 Supporting others: "Who had become demotivated?" (Kevin) and whose "heart's not really in it?" (Sandra)

This natural connection can often implicate youth workers to over-support those who are struggling. Here Kevin reflects on the contrasting side of supporting others, during his early career as a young youth worker, and knowing when to stop.

> The Youth Service is always changing, and I think you have to choose your allies carefully. Because I'm someone who's always managed my work and my life on being fairly energised, I spent a lot of time trying to support people who were, who had become demotivated.
>
> And what I failed to recognise was that some people weren't rescuable (laughs), and I spent too much energy trying to get them on board when they needed just to leave and eventually, they did.
>
> (Kevin 1: 111-119)

This early-career wisdom was useful for Kevin in his current role in restructuring the service. This can often be extremely difficult to accept, because, for youth workers, a fundamental premise is around working with young people whose family, schools or

community have given up on them through informal education and relationships (see literature review). It is our job as youth workers to help find their passion and strengths; we need to reconnect them to positive role models so that they can have a positive future.

Similarly, Sandra reflects on the frustration she feels as she supports students on placements.

> All my staff want to do the job. But I think when you've got [a student] who's heart isn't in it… like for me I can forgive anything if their hearts in it. If their hearts not in it, it really frustrates me, cos I think "what are you doing here?" I just think if you're going to do our line of work just be a little bit passionate about it, because it requires that, to do it justice.
>
> (Sandra 1: 865-873)

5.5.3 Being around positive people

For Ewan, the need to surround himself with positive people is strong. He proactively seeks out working with colleagues like this, as a counterbalance to any negativity felt with the cuts. Sandra and Ewan see spirituality as being linked to your *value base*, and for Ewan, this relates strongly to how he treats others. Here Ewan describes his desire to treat others well and supporting them is applicable to colleagues and to young people.

> Mine is just how you conduct yourself in front of others, towards others, trying to be supportive, trying to be reliable, punctual. How you are going to do stuff.
>
> (Ewan 2: 104-108)

For Michael, he can see the value of supporting others, and his unmet need for support of himself.

> Somebody offered to be my mentor, and I might well take them up because I think you do need to reflect. I think you do need that both in life and work, and therefore by implication I would say you would need that in your spiritual things, but why don't I do that? I used to do house groups, and I found those really helpful. And then time gets in the way.'
>
> (Michael 2: 555-557)

Michael reflects here and adds the significant phrase, recurrent in his interviews, that *time gets in the way* or often he will say *life gets in the way*. Michael has an individual and recurrent theme of busyness and time trapping him in certain situations. His reflections seem to show that he feels stuck in his current position, not entirely clear on how to get out. The use of a mentor would help this situation.

> I think what we need to do is to develop a group of non-managerial supervisors who could come in because I remember when I used to have that I was actually really helpful and I kind of miss that, just having that time to reflect is important and I don't think we do that enough, certainly in youth work terms.
>
> I know college it's sort of drummed into you and people write reflective practice notes and then you know as you do on you write fewer and fewer of them and then the reflection takes place in the care journey to the next meeting and then you just listen to the radio…. All the reflection disappears down the plughole or else you end up doing it at 3 in the morning when you're really worried.
>
> (Michael 3: 400-410)

In a particularly thought-provoking metaphor that comes through in the last two interviews, Michael relates his reflective practice to water disappearing *down the plughole* and then describes spirituality as *draining away*. This water metaphor is like that of West (2004), who compares spirituality to water in that it is hard to grasp. Michael sees his spirituality as being something in his past and not fully present in this current life. But he talks about this in a cyclical fashion that in connecting to a higher being, in Michael's case God, he is reminded that it is *very real*.

> There is something other than myself that keeps me going and wants to keep me going. Then that translates at times to a faith and a belief system. And then that gets tied up in church politics and bureaucracy and just doing things and the spirituality just drains away.
>
> Until you get to a stage where there's a crisis type thing, and your faith… you have to start reflecting again. And then you get to the point of something happens, a prayer is said and it's very real… I just felt filled of totally, amazingly, peacefulness.
>
> You know it was an amazing feeling and so is that spirituality? Is that faith is that?
>
> And yet you can't, it's that mountain top experience. You can't always be on a mountain top, and I think there is a danger sometimes of wanting to be on the Snowdon mountain top being physical, personal, emotional mountain top.
>
> (Michael 2: 127-130)

Living on the mountaintop is a little like the seeking spiritual place's subordinate theme, and yet in the everyday life is spirituality able to be *very real*. Michael describes his *reflection time* that features weekly in a shared calendar, helping him to carve out time, and feel accountability to reflect each week.

> It would be lovely to have an hour's reflection each week but maybe that's a fake persona really.

> But I think that's to say that you do need to stop and reflect both on your personal stuff, and work. I'm not so good on the personal, I'm quite good at reflecting work stuff, but not in that 9-10 slot.
>
> But it's there to remind myself to do it because it's good practice, so why don't I then apply that (laughs) to the spiritual development? Because it's gone off the boil.
>
> (Michael 2: 297-319)

Michael sees his own need for spiritual development, time to reflect and to have a mentor, but like many of us struggles to prioritise or find the time. And on some days struggles to feel like spirituality is real to him, in this current life.

5.6 Summary

All the participants in some way demonstrated the superordinate theme of Spiritual Needs, in that they were already, or through the interview process became, spiritually aware; they recognised in themselves a desire to seek spiritual places. Many of them had spiritual practices, some of which began or ended their days. The value of meeting their own spiritual needs through others' support and giving support to others seemed to come through strongly. The youth workers would consider many of these elements in their work with young people, but this superordinate theme is focused on the youth workers themselves.

The following section will examine the superordinate theme the Spirit of Youth Workers, and the nature or essence of the youth workers that has helped them remain within the current youth work context so far.

Chapter 6: The Spirit of Youth Workers

6.1 Introduction

Most of the participants spoke about the change they can make in young people's lives for the good. For youth workers, the awareness of the difference they can make in young people's lives allows them to find tangible meaning and purpose in their work. As the interviews connected with the profession of youth work situated here in the Midlands, most of the participants associated spirituality with a profound purpose to their careers. It complemented their sense of purpose in their job and the difference youth work can make to young people. Within this overall superordinate theme: The Spirit of Youth Workers, the subordinate themes of positivity, purpose, making a difference, and feeling that a job was *meant to be*, came through powerfully.

In contrast with the adaptability and struggle that youth workers find themselves in, Kevin identifies he has a strategic role.

> We are hanging on in there. We look at what's happening nationally [but locally], because of really good political support, we've positioned ourselves well.
>
> We've been strategically canny over the years, and we continue to be. I mean, I'm good at juggling lots of different things, and you have to be good at that you know.
>
> (Kevin 1: 294-299)

Kevin's senior leadership role in the youth service has meant that he feels a keen sense of ownership for creating a provision for young people and balancing decisions about funding cuts. He moves to distance himself slightly from the *we* who are *hanging on in there*, to the *we,* meaning youth workers on the ground and his team around him. He still identifies himself as a youth worker, even within this strategic management position. Always, he can locate his ongoing positive work trait: To juggle many aspects of his job for the benefit of the young people and the continuation of service provision.

6.2 The positive purpose of youth work

6.2.1 Focus on young people. "The energy that young people bring; despite all the challenges." (Kevin)

As most of the youth workers interviewed could do, Kevin was able to articulate a clear purpose in his job.

> I mean, it's still to ensure that we provide meaningful programmes and interventions for young people to enhance their lives and young people who have got limited life opportunities. So, it's usually my experience to coach, mentor, support other staff to recognise the challenges young people face. It's a bit of a cliché, about seeing the behaviour as part of the story; and challenging the behaviour and not the people; getting to know what the story is behind the person … that's the nice bit of the job; all the other bits are about budgets and finances.
>
> (Kevin 1: 266-273)

The balance between seeing the face-to-face role and the monetary management role of youth work is crucial for all youth workers. The *purpose* here is associated with a sense of professional identity incorporating youth work core values. Here the concept of a robust professional identity is prioritised alongside the importance of relationship building, conversation, and the story behind the behaviour.

Kevin could see the impact that keeping the young people in focus had on his well-being. He reflected on playing table tennis (a stereotypical youth work activity) while engaging in conversation with a young person in this simple youth work dialogue.

> It was fantastic; I felt brilliant afterwards. I think that staff get complacent about that. That energy that young people bring, despite all the challenges; it's fantastic! There's something about… again, youth work is life-changing, and I don't mean to be dramatic with that, but it is, it's why we should be doing it, it can change people's lives and often it's about… filling a gap in a young person's life, if it isn't filled, then the outcome for them is less likely to be positive.
>
> (Kevin 1: 439-445)

The transfer of energy is significant in reaffirming Kevin's sense of purpose in youth work. For Kevin, the life-changing impact of youth work as an intervention in young people's lives is the point of it all. Even as a manager, this focus on young people, and here specifically on their energy, is almost a message forward to himself and other staff. Those young people can still bring enormous vitality to their days, despite the difficult circumstances they find themselves in. This energy and positivity could be applied to the youth workers who now find themselves in demanding situations with their job precarity. The mutuality of young people modelling themselves as resilient, here through Kevin's description, seems to inspire him to be more positive and actively seek out face to face time with young people amidst the managerial roles he must deliver on.

This positive approach can be compared with Sandra's description of some youth workers who may be transferring their negative energy over to young people in their engagements with them.

> If you are a doom and gloom natural personality, and we all know them, don't we? You know the glass is always half-empty type person; and you are surrounded by a young person, who's already going through quite a lot, and you talk to them in a way… you've got no level of energy about you, no enthusiasm; you're just sitting there, basically talking to them because you're paid to sit there and talk to them. How is that young person going to feel?
>
> Somebody that's perhaps not getting time at home from anybody comes to a group, and talks to an adult, who basically doesn't… clearly doesn't, really care, I suppose. I know it's a bit harsh, but clearly doesn't care, you know what sense of value is that young person going to have, you know then they're going to leave there thinking "well maybe it's me," do you know what I mean?
>
> (Sandra 3: 555-559)

Sandra's own positive energy in youth work seems repelled by the idea that a youth worker would bring their negative energy to a conversation with a young person. She plays out the whole scenario to show the empathy she feels for the young person in that situation. As a youth worker, she would not dream of bringing that energy to work in the office, let alone with the young person. As with Kevin, the focus on young people is crucial to the positive, purposeful approach to youth work.

6.2.2 Hopeful message to young people: "We're here for a purpose, we've got a reason in life." (Brogan)

The awareness of youth work's purpose is a common theme throughout the interviews, with it being more than just a job; it is the personal impact it has on the youth worker and the difference it makes to young people. Brogan is conscious of what she brings as a youth worker to her practice with young people as she considers spirituality and youth work.

> So, for me: it's about challenging; it's about "I've found myself;" it's about self-awareness, it's about seeking answers. It's about reflection, and we do a lot about reflection in our jobs as youth workers as well. It's about having an understanding; it's about being in touch with your emotional side as well and being able to empathise with others. It's about "we're here for a purpose, we've got a reason in life."
>
> (Brogan 2: 50-58)

Here the repetition of *it's about* helps emphasise the point that youth work, which she later links to spirituality, for Brogan is multifaceted. This is a reflective, generative process, that allows the rhythm of saying *it's about* to generate the next concept. Brogan speaks as though she knows already that there are many spiritual dimensions to youth work, which then culminates in her underlying message of hope for young people: *we're here for a purpose, we have a reason in life*. In her school-based safeguarding role, this message brings a different light to many young people's situations, such as suicide attempts, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, and family issues. Young people will often question their own importance in life.

> In terms of the support levels that I put in for young people, I see that in part as being spiritual, I see it as like having a purpose in life…and having a belief that there is something more to life.
>
> (Brogan 2: 72-76)

The supportive nature of youth work is seen as connected with its purpose. And this, in turn, relates to spirituality for Brogan. She is linking it to her life purpose - not just the purpose of her job role.

> I just think there's a purpose in life, there's something more, there's something bigger and it's constantly striving to get to that place, you know, it's about connectedness as well, and I feel connected in my life, whatever it is, I feel like I'm connected.
>
> I: What to?
>
> To the purpose of life. Connected, in as much as, I know what my job is, and I don't mean my job as in here. I mean, I know what my job is. It's to nurture; it's to love, it's to raise awareness, to challenge inequalities, it's to help people that are suffering.
>
> You know, whereas before, you're in the rat race and you're earning a wage, and you're coming to work, day in day out, it isn't like that for me.
>
> (Brogan 2: 327 – 340)

Brogan here sounds like Sandra when she identifies that youth work is more than just paying the bills; it is not just about doing a job. This deep sense of purpose is crucial for them both.

6.2.3 A job well done – "I feel at peace with myself." (Brogan)

The concept that purpose in career and life can bring about some positive impact on the individual worker is prevalent within several of the interviews best shown here:

> I think it's just about that satisfaction and that feel-good factor, that sort of peace you know you're at peace with yourself. I feel at peace with myself; I know that if I've just done a day's work, I'm not going to go home and think: "Fantastic! Little Johnny got full A's and B's today," what I'm going to go home and reflect on is: "I'm so glad that young person invested their trust into me, and allowed me the privilege to work with them, and allowed me into their lives and trusted me."
>
> (Brogan 2: 341-351)

The sense of job satisfaction is enormous. Here it is not merely her sense of satisfaction; it is the difference, or change, in other people's lives, because of her interventions.

> So, I think in terms of my purpose, and in terms of that connectedness. That to me is that feeling inside that you've done the right thing, you've done your best, and you've done the right thing. And it's for the good of others, that other people have you know it's not about yourself (pause) does that make sense?
>
> (Brogan 2: 376-380)

Brogan values the feeling of peace from ethically doing the right thing with young people, and the impact it has on young people is tangible. The youth workers who have an awareness of professional purpose that shapes their youth work identity and impacts their personal lives seem to have a great deal of satisfaction through the role itself. Most participants felt this way about their youth work role. A robust and deep attachment that aligns with their own ethical or moral values could be why these workers remain in their jobs, even though the funding cuts are so prevalent and invasive.

Although the workplace is insecure, these workers have not left yet; their resiliency is grounded in core values of youth work and the impact of a job well done. As Kevin describes his role as a senior leader in youth work to be:

> Building that momentum and re-motivating ... can only happen once people are clear about what, and how, we're moving forward, there's still uncertainty around that, but the bottom line is there will always be young people …who need support.
>
> (Kevin 1: 421-425)

6.2.4 Helping young people reflect to "explore meaning in their lives." (Peter)

Like the others, Peter captures the importance of purpose in the job and the energy it provides, but he then explores the value of helping young people *reflect on their own lives* and focus on *their* purpose in life. The idea seems to build on the importance within his career, and spiritual life, of his work with young people.

> There is not much reflection in their houses; they don't grow in that environment where reflection is part of their day; they live day to day. And then, so, one of the things I try to do is... Okay, how do we start looking at helping these young people to reflect about their lives?
>
> I think that is a way into spirituality; if you like, it has to have a moment where they stop and think about their lives: "how I'm leading my life, is that the best way of achieving my potential?"
>
> So, as I said before, spirituality is a pursuit of meaning, of purpose, so I think that's the way, that's the entry point for young people to explore spirituality: exploring meaning of their lives, or purpose of their lives, or identity.
>
> (Peter 3: 62-70)

The connection with spirituality and purpose is like that of Brogan's, but Peter reminds us that this can be a daunting conceptual activity with young people.

> People are scared of the future, or scared …If you start talking to them about the meaning of life, or purpose, they may feel overwhelmed. Or they feel like, "I don't want to think about this."
>
> But it's certainly important, and I think we need to do more with young people. Try to stop, and say, "let's think about your life," "let's think about, do you think there is a purpose for your life?" to discover their passions, help them to reflect on who they are.
>
> (Peter 3: 76-81)

Youth work takes place in groups or with individuals within a variety of settings. Here Peter advocates working one to one with young people to give them support to think this through.

The experience of purpose in a career, and integrity (the personal alignment with the values underpinning this work) seems necessary to all youth workers, except for Sandra. She arguably works in this way by osmosis. All the youth workers have a shared level of youth work theoretical knowledge, practical application, and professional ethics that underpin and guide their youth work decision making. The youth worker's level of change to their own professional identity may vary from person to person. Still, here we see a collected group of individuals who can articulate their purpose and the importance of youth work.

6.3 Peace in a job

6.3.1 “I’m meant to be here” (Caitlyn)

Most of the youth workers identified a sense of vocation, or calling, towards their career pathway or direction. They displayed a *spiritual belief* in the reason they are in that job at this time**.** Those with religious faith (Sikh and Christian), identified a spiritual calling to their appointment: Sandra, working with communities in the voluntary sector and Peter who believes that through prayer, God provided a job for him. This *spiritual belief* then has a noticeable *impact on the worker,* and their state of resiliency, or lack of anxiety, within the workplace situation.

Those without religious affiliation described this same spiritual belief. Caitlyn depicts a specific moment when she strongly felt her belief that she was *meant to be* in this job:

> I’m quite happy where I am. In terms of asking me about spirituality, probably about three months in, this is something that I felt. I drove home and cried, in a good way. Because I was like, “this is where I’m meant to be.”
>
> And I had that real sense of, this is what I’m meant to be doing, this is where I’m meant to be working, and these are the young people you’re meant to be working with, I just had that sense this is where I’m meant to be.
>
> You know it was a really, overwhelming sense, and then I just thought this is where I want to be…There’s no hidden agendas, there’s no… well, that’s not my job, it is just about ‘we have this to do, how are we going to do it’ and work together to do it, it was really refreshing and inspiring and something I just wanted to do. So, at the minute I’m very happy where I am.
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 527-543)

This *overwhelming sense* could be describing a spiritually reflective experience that she would draw on again in the future. With a definite feeling that this is right and where she should be - this then translates into happiness in her current role.

A sense of purpose can be closely tied in here, where Caitlyn feels not only that her job has a definite meaning, but that she is the specific person who should be doing this job at this time, in this area. As Caitlyn recounts this experience, the internal dialogical shift from *I* to *you* and back again, is subtle, but profound here.

When Caitlyn says “this is what **I’m** meant to be doing” it demonstrates a reflective self-awareness of her position and acceptance internally and outwardly. She then slips to

these are the young people you're meant *to be working with*. It is interesting to consider whose voice this is as it could be likened to a spiritual voice, or other, telling her she is in the right place. A more critical interpretation of this phrase "meant to be" could be in a judgemental voice that is more about "should be doing" rather than feeling secure and at peace. This could be a pressuring voice that might prevent Caitlyn from seeing her agency and power in any change. Later in the interviews, Caitlyn has changed her role after being under the threat of redundancy. It is worth questioning whether the attitude of "meant to be" prevents her from fully challenging the changes taking place. However, taking in the context of her active union involvement, it seems that "meant to be" sat alongside an active union involvement challenging unjust changes.

Caitlyn does not go on to talk about *you're* meant to be further, and it is almost a passing slip as she talks about this spiritual experience. The interviews align with the supportive, protective voice she uses with young people and staff and that she searched for in her childhood. This is from the first phase of interviews and, as they go on, her position shifts. She struggles to reconcile the *meant to be* feeling and the abrupt end to her current role – asking how this closure to her work fits within her peace about where she is.

6.3.2 Attitude to change: "My story has already been told" (George)

As with Caitlyn, George has a spiritual belief about his career he describes as *predestination*. This belief has a visible impact on his attitude to change, and his view that we need to *discover the story* rather than being responsible for constructing it.

> I mean, I guess, I'm also a believer, in the sense of my story's already been told, and things are mapped out. Cos, I think lots of things have happened in my life that you look back and think, that just didn't happen randomly, there was…things happen for a reason, but I also think that part of the travelling is discovering what that story is, so I think yeah, I think, I'm here because this is where I'm supposed to be.
>
> (George 2: 198-207)

The nature of predestination identified by George is a little different from Caitlyn's firm belief she is *meant to be*. It in some way relinquishes the individual control to the journey which is already mapped out. George's sense of acceptance and trust in the future because of the way the past has happened. This slight difference in *calling* and *vocation* is like that found with Peter, although he describes resistance to this and his struggle with God through prayer about changing situations.

6.3.3 “I don’t fear to lose a job… God’s in control” (Peter)

Peter takes it one step further and his belief, and *relationship with God* keeps him free from anxiety about job security. He believes *God is in control* and that He will provide for him in some way. This sits alongside his Christian beliefs, and his upbringing overseas, where spirituality was more accepted in everyday life.

> In terms of my… job security, I know that they are, it’s secure until next year. That’s as far as I know. Because funding is getting more and more difficult… it’s been very hard to plan more than a years’ time at this time so, in terms of my job, yeah, we’re still trying to find, every year we try to… we don't have three-year funding for my job.
>
> I: And what keeps you okay with that?
>
> What keeps me okay with that? I would say it’s partly my relationship with God … I don’t fear to lose a job.
>
> In a way I feel like God’s in control so … as long as I do the best I can, it’s fine. I think that my job is to do the best that I can, in my job, right now. If I lose my job next year, I’d say, I’m sure that God would provide.
>
> (Peter 1 528-540)

Peter has an interesting shift, which may have been a slip due to English not being his first language, from *my* job to *a* job. Here Peter describes the lack of anxiety and fear about losing *a job* as God is in control; the subtle shift back then to *my job* is about doing the best he can and reattaching himself to his current job. He is describing the principle of losing any job. His trust in God and lack of fear, rather than his specific fear over this current job. This principled approach is helpful for the long term rather than merely for present security and seems deeply embedded in his beliefs about how God views him.

6.3.4 “I have to understand the anxiety of other people” (Kevin) - Managing others through redundancy

Peter and Kevin have a similar attitude here towards worrying about their job security from quite different faith backgrounds - Peter being Christian and Kevin being an agnostic. This helps both Peter and Kevin feel at ease with uncertainty. Kevin talks about if he was made redundant in future rounds of cuts in the youth service.

> If I were out of work tomorrow, I don’t have an anxiety, and I'm not anxious about that I'd lose some comforts, but I have other than my two dependents which are a cat and a dog. But I understand, and I have to understand, the anxiety of other people in terms of mortgages and stuff, but I'll manage that.

> I know I could do anything if I had to work in a bar. I'd work in a bar… I quite like the idea of different challenges, as well. But it's important to understand the impact, in terms of morale, within the service, of people being anxious. And uncertainty, more than actually knowing… I think it creates more anxiety.
>
> I think good leadership is honest about what the challenges are, and what potentially could happen; and there isn't a lot of that around right now, in terms of where we're going, you know.
>
> (Kevin 1: 316-328)

Kevin's lack of anxiety seems to arise out of his sense of flexibility and adaptability to work. His feeling of a plan and specific coping mechanisms are introverted rather than relying on a *God* to provide or a plan that is mapped out. Sandra is resistant to the fear around job security; the theme about a spiritual belief that things are *meant to be* comes up again. Just like George who had a feeling of trust and acceptance Sandra had a similar view.

> If you're facing a life problem, I think having faith, in my opinion, does help. Because it's almost like you think to yourself, "well if it was meant to be, then it was kind of destined to be," so you don't fight or challenge it as much because you kind of accept it.
>
> I think maybe if I'm going to translate that to me as a worker, it probably does inform the way that I inform myself as a professional. Because if something happens…I'm not saying I don't question things, because I do, but I'm not so perhaps cynical or critical about it because I think it was meant to be.
>
> So, we can learn from it and if it was something negative, then make sure…trying to make sure it doesn't happen again, if it's something positive then that's happy days.
>
> (Sandra 2: 75-88)

This positive approach to working has a direct impact on Sandra's attitude and that of her team who she manages. It allows space from questioning why things happen:

> If you've got faith that, perhaps this was what's meant to happen, you don't stress yourself out as much; because you're not sitting there just pondering, why? Why? Why? all the time. And I do know people that are very 'why-people,' and I think they're stressed all the time (laughs), so maybe they need to get in touch with their spirituality.
>
> (Sandra 2: 100-109)

Sandra offers an idea of belief and contentment in what is meant to happen. To counteract stress and being consumed by the *nagging Why-Gremlin* in our minds. It seems to be a conscious choice by Sandra to not be like this, and in her role as manager to support those in her team.

The concept that a spiritual belief can then have a direct impact on attitudes in work personally and on into the team, can be seen vividly in Caitlyn's recount of a non-fatal shooting in her work community.

> The people who did the shooting are connected. Young people who are connected with the centre.
>
> They have been causing hassles for the full-time members of staff, but funnily, … I mean this is where … there's perhaps spirituality comes into it, I feel great there, I feel safe, I'm moving my office there, I feel it's the right thing to do, I don't feel intimidated, you know the time it feels right for me to be there, even with all this drama going on it doesn't faze me. I know I'll be okay.
>
> Statistically, actually, there's been a shooting; there have been young people involved; young people have threatened and intimidated the team in the centre.
>
> Yet I'm there going, "I feel fine" It'll be okay, I know it will be.
>
> (Caitlyn 2: 549 – 575)

Caitlyn then goes on to remember the feeling of *meant to be* in her previous role. Although this shooting has happened in her new job, following the closure of her Youth centre in the school, she still feels a peace that *it's the right time to be there*. However, she seems unsettled with her previous assurance that it was right. As if to say, if something is right, just because a strategic management strategy is to cut the provision, how does that affect the idea that her being placed there is meant to be. Is it wrong for it to close? Is it okay for her to feel safe, in her new role, when her spiritual belief might suggest she should still be in her last one?

> This is why it's so hard because I'm moving from a place where I was meant to be. I know, you know, things change and more than likely this will be good for me.
>
> (Caitlyn 2: 549-582)

In her final sentence, she tries to be reflective and hopeful that at some point, she will be able to look back and reflect on the positives of her impact in this role as she manages others through the restructures and redundancies. It could be argued she is convincing herself this is a good place, not where she is meant to be, but good, nevertheless.

6.4 The difference (impact) youth workers make if they….

The idea youth workers make a difference or have an impact came through strongly, and the youth workers explored the ideas behind their attitudes and that of other workers

when thinking through impact. Most of the youth workers described a positive attitude towards their work, and the young people they worked with as being essential to it.

6.4.1 …Like young people and enjoy the work

Kevin recognised in himself, and other workers he managed, that workers needed to like the young people they work with.

> It makes a difference, it does, and it makes a difference if youth workers, …you know, the critical bit is youth workers like and understand, and it might sound barmy saying youth workers like young people, but some people come into youth work unsure about whether they like young people, and by like, I mean, you know, respect them for the way they deal…the resilience and you know the way they cope with the things.
>
> (Kevin 1: 472-478)

In the interview Kevin resonated with me because I have worked with young people and trained youth workers like that. I have seen that some workers come into youth work because of their own positive experiences with youth workers; it has benefited them as young people. But they might not necessarily have a *respect* or *like* for young people in general.

Ewan recalls his entry into youth work originally.

> So, I did sort of meander a bit to get this far in youth work. As we said in the first meeting, but that makes a difference doing something that I enjoy. I think that's a great part, if you can just sort of be happy and in work and stuff.
>
> And you see so many people…not just work. You see people who exist rather than enjoying life, and obviously, that's not always through choice, but that gives me my sense of being there for my family, hopefully, and things.
>
> (Ewan 2: 76-81)

His exploration of working in a career he really enjoys, rather than simply existing, reflects his time working in factories before he moved to youth work. He can see his move into a youth work career as a *meander* or *lucky break*, but if you enjoy it, then it makes all the difference. He is very present *in the moment* with young people. Although he seems to draw on the meander analogy slightly diminishingly of himself, it could be viewed with a positive perspective with meandering through his career is more like a mindful walk through his career.

> It was luck! I didn't particularly do well at school, I was in a rubbish job, and I was looking for some extra hours, just for an extra bit of money; this is going back years and years. And there was a job for a part-time youth worker, one night a week, and I thought I'd much rather be doing that, than stuck stacking shelves.
>
> I may as well do something that I might enjoy, because when I was a young person about 18-19. I enjoyed working with young people then, so I thought I'd give this a go. I didn't know what I'd be getting into really at the time but just took on more responsibility.
>
> I went for the worker-in-charge post, and then got a better understanding of it as I sort of progressed, managed to get a full-time job, on a secondment initially.
>
> (Ewan 1: 141-153)

Here we then see the timeline shift from *feeling lucky* at his entry point to youth work and continuing to enjoy its practice. However, Ewan feels a little lost in his career direction now that his planned direction has been affected by the cuts, restructures, and reduction in promotional opportunities.

> When I'm doing the work, I still really enjoy it, still enjoy seeing that you are moving people on, and how being there for them and that side of it, I don't know what I want though, to be honest. As you get older, do you want to be, are you still relevant?
>
> I think you still can be relevant regardless of your age as a youth worker, but just in terms of wanting to do that, or whether you would want to progress. There are some opportunities out there, but they are few and far between as a progression, so in that respect, I think you are sort of tied in, you know your hands are tied a bit.
>
> (Ewan 3: 266-272)

He seems to engage in the work and enjoys doing it, but there is a hint that after the day is over, he reflects on his career direction and listens to the echo of voices that say as you age, you should progress and move on to management. While Ewan feels his hands are tied, he is not upset by this; he is unsure where to turn and how to plan. He is at ease with it all, and, as he explores in the chapter around Redundancy Induced Loss, he has become numb to the cuts now and not sure where to begin looking.

Likewise, Sandra enjoys her work and reflects on her reasons for remaining in the role for a comparatively long time.

> I think [Carol's] ace we get on really well; if my boss was rubbish, I wouldn't stay. I can't work for somebody who doesn't get me. That's really important to me. So, my support network with regards to management is good.

> The team I manage are ace, I've got to be honest, I feel really jammy. Like, I come to work, sometimes it doesn't even feel like work ‘cos you get to be with people that I would choose to be friends with.
>
> (Sandra 1: 344-348)

This feeling of being in the right place, with a good team, and manager, all seem to keep Sandra settled with a sense of enjoyment about the role. Her positive attitude comes through strongly. This mirrors Kevin’s idea at the start, the value and importance of a positive attitude and caring for the young people you work with.

6.4.2 …Persist with young people

Youth workers make a difference if they persist with young people:

> We had a couple of brothers who used to consistently turn up late, and it felt like it was just a bit of a challenge just testing the boundaries, and it was impacting on the others.
>
> But they were turning up you know, and we had a number of conversations within the staff team about what we should do, you know, and a couple of hard-liners saying “we need to get them out” … I said “we need to persist with them they still want to come, they’re interested, but there's something going on here.”
>
> Anyway, we eventually found out that the reason they were late, they only had one pair of jeans each. They washed them every night, and they couldn't dry them, so they ironed them dry cos they didn't have any heating…
>
> (Kevin 1: 198-214)

For Kevin, the youth work impact was around the boys’ lives, and as a manager he was keen to instil this attitude of perseverance in the staff.

6.4.3 …Speak up for Young People

For Brogan, as with many others, the key to youth work is in advocating for young people.

> I see it as (pause) I see it as being in here to challenge the inequalities in society. To support; to make sure that people are treated in a fair and just way.
>
> When in terms of my job, I see it as sort of being kind and understanding and being able to empathise as just like looking at the world as a big…’cos it's huge and the amazing things that the planet has just everything, everything so (pause) …

This sense of awe and wonder is amazing here, the process of talking about this is a spiritual experience for Brogan:

> …there is always something more, like life and existence and just everything, how we live our lives there are reasons behind everything it's just looking more at the bigger picture, but then doing a job where I will fight for the underdog, the people that need the support and challenge the systems, challenge the frameworks, challenge the policies, don't be afraid to speak up for somebody, don't be afraid to speak up even if you're standing there alone, don't go with the flow.
>
> (Brogan 2: 90-103)

Brogan's recognition of advocacy being important in youth work comes through with Caitlyn. Interestingly, these two are based in schools at this point, and have a powerful desire to advocate to teachers about the young people they work with.

> I'm very much about people and being in a school is all about people. I'm not always afraid to say things, so I then sometimes have to backtrack but...
>
> You know, I think that shows young people that you are kind of human, 'cos I backtrack with young people as well, and that's okay.
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 613-617)

6.4.4 …Be proactive and prepared

As well as the positive attitudes of enjoying working, speaking up for young people, and being persistent, the idea of preparing and being flexible came through with Peter.

> I guess that's what has changed since I've been in this country and try to learn more. You have to be proactive in one way or another. I believe that God will give the opportunities you have to get ready for them; you have to be prepared.
>
> So that's why I've been thinking, okay, how do I get there and …"okay do I have to do further education? Do I have to do a Masters?", "who are the people that I have to link with, who are the people that seem to dream the same thing?"
>
> (Peter 1: 628-634)

Kevin then talks about his motivation to work in youth work.

> My motivation in terms of youth work is fairly political; it's a social politic model in terms of driven by wanting to try to improve the lives of those people who have had a bad hand of cards dealt.
>
> (Kevin 2: 67)

The perspective that youth work can make a change in young people's lives is important to note here. Many participants were reflecting on the difference youth workers have made to their own lives – as young people and in their inspirational career choices.

The superordinate theme, the Spirit of Youth Workers captures the positive attitude towards youth work that helps the youth workers have job satisfaction, see change, and find fulfilment in their jobs. The importance of purpose within this comes through strongly, and the youth workers' ability to take the general purpose of youth work and embody that within their lives and practice seems essential for them. Once this process of an embodiment has happened, it is as if, regardless of what job title changes or shifts in priorities happen, these workers are resilient as their inner core remains the same; spirituality plays a big part in that for many of the workers.

6.5 Summary

The youth workers during the interviews were able to articulate a clear purpose in their job. They could see the impact that had on their well-being and linked the search for purpose as a spiritual activity needed individually and in turn, to young people in youth work settings. Having this purposeful approach to youth work allowed workers to reflect on the life-changing nature of youth work. They could see the value they could make to young people's lives, brought into sharper focus as youth work's purpose is watered down or slowly eroded from its main raison d'être.

The strength of professional identity, amongst those interviewed, goes some way to counteract this erosion. The value of congruence in the youth workers' lives seems vital, as does the match between personal and professional values. They are focused, feel at peace in their work and that they are meant to be.

As the Youth work role changes within organisational restructure the question is, can the youth worker remain congruent? Their job's direction and purpose may be challenged which may mean staying a youth worker at the heart of their work is not possible when the role has changed so much that it is no longer recognisable as youth work.

Over half of the participants had felt they were *meant to be* in their current job, with a deep sense of calling and peace about where they were. It struck me that the people I interviewed had been, so far, resilient to the cuts taking place. Some reflected on why they thought this was, and the youth workers' spirit was a key factor in this.

Chapter 7: A Changing Youth Work Identity

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the idea of a changing identity for youth workers. Subordinate themes that arose included when all youth workers talked about their start in youth work and when they moved on to their current identity. Then many of them considered the concept of moving on from their current roles. This identity theme came through in all interviews and captured when they had the opportunity for reflection within the interviews. Many youth workers had not considered their stories of becoming a youth worker for a long time.

7.2 Becoming a youth worker

The professional identity of each of the youth workers came through strongly within all the interviews. The youth workers spoke fluently about what youth work entails and the process of change necessary to become a youth worker, which was developed through professional training. They all talked about their own identity and many about supporting other workers within the youth work sector. Brogan aligns spirituality with change, referring to the process of becoming a youth worker as being itself a spiritual process of becoming.

> I think change is being spiritual, and spirituality is about change. Taking yourself through a process and having that recognition of change.
>
> (Brogan 2: 118-119)

Youth workers seem to be going through more change in their jobs, currently. To recognise the change needed now, it is worth examining the initial transition into the youth workers they are today.

7.2.1 Higher Education – “The catalyst for change” (Brogan)

For some participants, that move into higher education, and training to become a qualified youth worker, was a process that opened themselves up to different beliefs and distinct types of people. Brogan recalls university changing her value base and in turn her behaviour to others.

> [University is] where you're forced to question things more, and I think that opened up my mind, university definitely opened up my mind, I saw people differently as well so different religions, different beliefs, different people.

> I can remember (pause) some of the thoughts and the things that I've said in the past have been hugely discriminatory and wrong I just think: "my goodness me," I can't believe I've even said those things or thought those things. I just see people as very different now, to how I would have.
>
> The catalyst for that change, if you like, was starting higher education.
>
> (Brogan 2: 150 – 162)

The preparation for meeting young people, often from backgrounds outside of their friends and family, occurred naturally for some through their Higher Education. Kevin's political awakening happened within his youth work training. He was keen to embrace the professional identity change of himself, even his capacity to bring about change with young people and, enthusiastically, the whole world.

> My sort of youth work, was … I became quite politicized, through my study and was introduced… my bible, at the time, was the Red Trouser Philanthropist. It changed my life and opened my eyes to the injustices and imbalances.
>
> I came out very keen to want to change the world, at that time as a young youth worker. And I see that in a lot of youth workers, and I try and embrace that very positively, you know. It's really critical because it brings with it a lot of energy.
>
> (Kevin 1 40-47)

His role of a senior manager has meant that he has been able to encourage and grow that same passion for change in other new youth workers.

7.2.2 The secret path of qualifying as a youth worker

Caitlyn's childhood experience was lacking in youth work input but even still she felt a draw to the profession.

> I'd never come into contact with a youth worker, but there were things that were difficult in my childhood. So that when I saw that there was a position being advertised, I thought, "I wish I'd had someone to talk to"
>
> I've always been fairly self-sufficient, so whether that's because I've always felt spiritual about things and I've known that no matter how tough things are going to be they'll be okay, you know, so life has been challenging but I've always come out the other side.
>
> (Caitlyn 3: 316-324)

While Caitlyn felt held back by those around her when trying to search for her own youth work path, she was keen to redress that with her support of volunteers, part-timers, and trainee youth workers in her leadership role. Her move into youth work happened when:

> By chance, I picked up the Big Issue, saw on the back of it the job advertised (so there must have been some sort of collaboration with the Guardian at that time to advertise in there) and the job was in there.
>
> Now, I never bought the Guardian; I never knew that youth work was advertised in the Guardian. You know I didn't even know there was Children and Young People Now [periodical], I didn't know those things were there.
>
> Because I was kept in this little part-timer's bubble; without staff telling me how to progress, how to get to uni. So, I saw this job that was like a traineeship that paid to go to University, it was like: "that's what I want."
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 378-390)

7.2.3 Training as a youth worker in mid-life: "I have unlearned how to be a manager" (Peter)

Many of the workers trained in youth work at the start of their careers and ahead of their move into a full-time youth work post. But Peter had been in a youth work post for several years before training in youth work at degree level. His role entailed managing the project he worked for.

So, for Peter, this underpinning youth work degree disrupted what he thought were his foundations. His management identity was forsaken to shape his youth work identity first.

> I was doing the degree, I was very focused on the young people, and that distracted me a little bit on the management side because I had to do, face to face and it all was about the young people….
>
> When I finished the course, I thought: 'wow, it seems like I have unlearned how to be a manager'. And then I felt a lot of low self-esteem in that area, it seems like I don't know what to do, now.
>
> (Peter 1: 362-366)

However, this openness to change allowed Peter to take on a more senior leadership role and begin his master's degree in leadership and management. For Michael, the move into youth work happened officially after applying for a job working with young people when he graduated from University.

7.2.4 A faith-based route into youth work

However, Michael's childhood formational youth work experience, and his youth workers, sparked an interest within him about following that path for himself.

> I had a very, very supportive youth worker… voluntary youth worker, or two: [Dan] and [Pat] basically, they did everything. They'd take us out on sports activities. I was heavily involved in the chess and quiz groups; and going along to the club on a Monday or a Tuesday night. They were always there really, and on a Sunday, as well. So, they were role models really. I thought: “hey that's something I'd probably like to do … at some point.” So, I was involved in, as I say the voluntary side of it and doing camps during the summer.
>
> (Michael 1: 40-46)

In the same way as Michael moved to youth work after finishing a degree (not in youth work), so did Sandra. The call, for her, was into community-based work in the voluntary sector. Sandra attributes the move into this area being linked closely to her faith.

> I do think my faith helps with that because Sikhism teaches us to be good people and try and give back. So, if I think about the personal voluntary work that I've done, I think that has dictated that and has helped informed that I wanted to do that.
>
> The line of work that I'm in now, you know, we deal with people. I think that's not a coincidence because when I graduated, I did want to go into community work, I'd love to do something whereby I get to interact with people, something that's benefitting people.
>
> (Sandra 2: 365-370)

Sandra felt that the move into this sector was right for her and champions the work that the voluntary sector can do.

> I think my own spirituality actually dictated the job that I'm doing today because it was a conscious decision for me to enter the voluntary sector. I always had a strong understanding of it, and I always thought it was the best way to deliver community work. I think if we're talking about reaching hard to reach groups, the voluntary sector can do that better than any other.
>
> You know I'm slightly biased because I work for the voluntary sector now so I would say that. Still, even if I didn’t, I think my personal opinion, even before I did, was that people that work for a charity, they can build inroads easier than say a statutory worker, but they've got their role to play as well.
>
> So yeah, me as a person, and my personal spirituality has definitely informed the job I do today; so actually, it's all quite relevant really.
>
> (Sandra 2: 379-393)

Sandra is amazed that spirituality and her job link together – as though in this reflective moment, this is the first time she considered this.

7.3 Youth Work professional identity

7.3.1 “I’m not ashamed of that” (Brogan)

Each of the youth workers interviewed had a clear sense of youth work identity regardless of the job they found themselves in. Be it a management role, school-based work, statutory sector reforms or the voluntary sector. Brogan best demonstrates this in her role at a school; she is not employed as a youth worker, but:

> I would always say I'm a youth worker; young people call me Brogan.
>
> (Brogan 1: 241)

She is keen to distinguish the teachers and her role. She is there as a safeguarding lead and is on the senior leadership team of the school, but her approach is a youth work one.

> One thing that I'm quite passionate about, I have managed to maintain my identity as a youth worker, because I always refer to myself as a youth worker, I've kept that autonomy I've not been sucked into the school.
>
> I've kept an environment for young people whereby it's an equal environment, whereby they can talk in a confidential arena, and they know that their information is safe, they understand the boundaries around that if they make a disclosure, but they come, and they access the support, and they benefit from the support.
>
> (Brogan 1: 198-207)

Her work ethos encapsulates youth work and her desire to bring positive change for the young people she works with. She reflects on her time employed as a youth worker within the youth service and sees that as formational in her current approach now.

> I was always a Youth Worker and the work that I delivered with young people, while I was employed by the youth service, was underpinned by the core values of youth work. So, the voluntary participation; the differentiation levels for people; the curriculum area; the equality within our relationship. We've got a mutual trust, respect, honesty. That's something that has always been firmly embedded in my practice.
>
> (Brogan 1: 30-36)

While knowing her core values of youth work, and how these underpin her practice, training within a multi-professional context had its issues. Brogan notes youth workers, while in training, were often seen as:

> the poor relation and never had the credibility and the value placed on it, as I believe it should have. I’m passionate about youth work and strongly believe that it works.
>
> I think that youth work has lost its place, almost, in terms of what’s happened to local authorities and youth services. They’ve never really

> had that credibility anyway, I can remember when I was at university myself, and social workers and youth workers … there was always that sort of tension.
>
> But now, [when I have Social Work students on placement] I introduce myself as a professionally qualified youth worker cos I'm not ashamed of that.
>
> (Brogan 1: 715-718)

The idea youth work and social work are in a way related, but without the same professional standing, is concerning, but a familiar perspective from my own experience of training youth workers at degree level.

7.3.2 "We are losing our identity as workers" (Ewan)

However, the distinction between youth work and social work now seems blurry, as youth workers are often given caseloads of young people, and social work tasks to complete. Anecdotally, this has led to many youth workers choosing to retrain as social workers; Ewan reflects differently on the youth work identity.

> I think we are losing our identity as workers, and we're just that general support thing. It wouldn't surprise me if the few remaining youth workers (statutory), are absorbed into more sort of social work or that sort of field, in the voluntary sector there is less and less I'm aware of, well there's more reliance on volunteers.
>
> (Ewan 3: 185-189)

For Ewan, his identity as a youth worker within the youth service should have been the most protected with the youth work terms and conditions through the JNC. However, as Local Authorities turn their back on previously agreed pay scales and working conditions, the sense of protected identity becomes weaker, and Ewan describes the loss of identity powerfully. This is explored in the chapter about Redundancy Induced Loss more deeply, as it looks at the effects of the cuts in youth services, the voluntary sector, on the workers themselves.

7.4 Moving on and passing forward

7.4.1 Lack of agency in career planning.

There was a hopeful voice of change during their training, we now find a less optimistic view, without agency of career direction. Here Ewan continues to reflect on the notion of planning your next career move and expands on the ramifications of being trapped in the local authority.

> I think in terms of the direction I wanted to go in, I think it's been taken out of my hands a little bit, that's how I feel. I think there are jobs around, but rightly or wrongly, the luxury of the local authority, I suppose, is the salary that I'm on now, is better.
>
> And I didn't come in to do it for the money, especially, but now I've got a small family… I've got bills to pay as everyone would have; so that's something that unfortunately I've got to consider.
>
> (Ewan 1: 45-50)

The transition from a hopeful youth worker, to being within the middle of a recession, with budget cuts that are affecting the numbers of workers, and reduced opportunity to progress and apply for new initiatives is echoed by Kate, who like Ewan is employed in the local authority.

> So, but you know it does feel like a bit of a brick wall on the other hand, I just can't see anything that's interesting enough; and that was what was nice about central government-funded programmes.
>
> Where most things I've ever applied for has been time-limited and invariably they've then continued, in fact all of them have continued, I've never come to a point where I've started a job that was three years, and there wasn't a job at the end of it, you know it's not like that now is it?
>
> (Kate 1: 430-436)

It seems that proactively creating your career may be a distant memory, as Kevin reflects on the youth work path he took, and the agency he felt over his own job choices:

> [In jobs] I've always been a 3- or 4-years kind of…it's long enough to be doing one thing, I always like new challenges, after about three and a half years I started looking for other work, and what I might do.
>
> And part of what I wanted to do was try and find a youth work job that was about working with young people and issue-based but didn't have a building attached to it.
>
> (Kevin 1: 70-79)

Now, as part of the reshaping of finance within statutory youth work, many of the youth centres have been sold for development, or back to communities themselves to run. So, the opportunity to work in a purpose-built youth centre is now rare.

7.4.2 Facilitating growth in others: "an underlying belief in the individual" (Michael)

Kevin and Michael, both in senior leadership roles, have hope for youth workers to develop, grow and change; in the same way that they have confidence for young people to grow. Here Michael tentatively links this process through supervision, with spirituality.

> Through [supervision] and through that development, she will grow as an individual and then, with greater help from us, and other people.
>
> So, is that spirituality? Possibly. It's an underlying belief in the individual which I try and foster in the organisation in whatever way I can.
>
> (Michael 3: 206-209)

Michael views the idea of supervision, to understand the youth workers' motivation, values, and beliefs, as spiritual, and in turn that *belief in the individual* and the young person will bring about change in their lives, and they will know they are valuable.

> As a manager, I need to get more involved in what it is that youth workers are doing, and why are they doing it. And that to me, is an element, I think, of spirituality – the value base.
>
> I'd like to see that those are the wider values of spirituality: of the belief in the individual; and the belief that a young person can change, and we believe they are valuable.
>
> (Michael 3: 78-82)

The growth of staff through supervision comes through in most people's interviews. The youth work professional identity has a firm grounding in equipping young people to lead youth work and to train up the next generation of youth workers. So many of the youth workers embody this.

Caitlyn also sees the value of supporting her staff, and youth work students to develop and grow in their own professional identities:

> I kind of feel, because of my starting point (I started as a volunteer then a part-time youth worker) I was desperate to get into full-time youth work. Nobody told me how to do it, and when I did find out how to do it, it was like someone could have easily told me that route, and I could have taken a different path...
>
> So, then I feel, like I want to share my knowledge with other people because I never had that shared with me.
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 60 – 72)

Passing on the inherent wisdom of previous youth workers is something of a youth work tradition. But as the changing external climate continues, many experienced youth workers have taken voluntary redundancy, and that shared wisdom is lost.

7.5 Summary

This section examined how they became youth workers, the changes they had to cope with and how their youth work identity changed. Some of the youth workers specifically link spirituality with change and becoming a youth worker. Most of the youth workers can adapt to this changing climate well, drawing on their career pathways. They have amended their working practices while not losing sight of the core values of youth work, and in turn, at this point, their professional identity is secure.

The problem comes as the youth workers begin looking for the next step in their careers, and many find few options. There is a link to supporting and developing others, linked to spirituality, hoping for change and growth. The next section explores the superordinate theme of Redundancy Induced Loss as youth workers are forced to consider their next steps in their youth work careers.

Chapter 8: Redundancy Induced Loss

8.1 Introduction

As the youth workers interviewed began to talk about their experiences in youth work currently, and their reflections on spirituality, the themes of loss, grief, and death seemed to emerge. They compare the cuts and redundancies with more traditional responses to bereavement. The participants talked about the nature of death, immortality, various stages of grief and their hope for a life beyond death.

Many of the youth workers were having daily conversations about the cuts with co-workers; these had begun to be the backdrop of the youth work they were delivering or the organisations they were managing. This was shown as affecting each of the workers, in a variety of ways including personal coping with the possibility of redundancy and the plans that they might need to make to take back some control.

8.2 Protection – The Centre Bubble

The theme of protection came across strongly within this superordinate theme and illustrated well with a gem that shone out strongly from within an individual interview (Smith 2011). Caitlyn talked about her creation of a safe youth centre bubble around both young people and her part-time staff.

> We've got the Centre bubble. So, we surround ourselves with good people, good attitudes, do what we need to do with the young people that we work with, and try not to let anything negative effect our work really.
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 81-83)

This concept of sheltering people from the effects of the cuts comes through strongly here, and Caitlyn's hope is that although the restructures are likely to directly affect some of these staff, she is using her youth worker positive spirit to keep things safe. If we consider the spirituality that Caitlyn talks about in her second interview this is a similar approach to her use of crystals to protect her office space. She was keen to protect herself from negativity and spoke about showering everyday clothing herself with protective light too.

The *protective centre bubble* emulates this and shows Caitlyn is concerned about her part-time staff and young people. She like all the others interviewed wants the young

people to benefit from the youth work provision for as long as possible, before the cuts hit:

> Because there has been a restructure of the service, and really that is going to come in to play starting from now, there's been over the last 12 months a lot of uneasiness a lot of uncertainty.
>
> So, although we've felt it when we were at work, it doesn't affect our work, 'cos we're kind of in that Centre bubble...'
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 83-86)

Her desire to protect the staff and the language of a *protective centre bubble*, mirrors the language she used as she spoke about her experience of being sheltered in a part-timer's bubble and not being aware of progression or training routes in youth work. But in this case, it is out a concern for the uncertainty of the restructures in the local authority. In this round of cuts, she felt secure for her own role, but:

> you have that sense of security but then you also have this sense of unfairness because you know there are other people who are going to lose their jobs.
>
> There are young people across the city that are going to lose service...
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 97-108)

I began to reflect on this in my bracketing interview:

> How do people in that kind of setting… with lots of cuts, particularly in the council where it's every year, where it's a cycle of who's getting cut next… how do they maintain everything? Do they just block it out and get on with their lives, or do they… you know, what do they do?
>
> Bracketing interview 2

It became apparent in analysing the data through the IPA that the youth workers were feeling a loss of their professional identity and in some cases struggling to cope with the approaching redundancy. This interview process, for some, was the only space they had been able to reflect on this. They were demonstrating numbness to the situation, a sense of loss for what used to be, and while some felt anger and frustration, others reached that point of acceptance. They had reflections on mortality and immortality and employed a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with this. Some of those interviewed touched on a hope for the future of youth work, George suggested hopefully that out of this *death* something new could come.

This section captures the superordinate theme of Redundancy Induced Loss. The nature of death, itself, is a spiritual concept and so to explore this within the interview

unprompted, and so frequently, seemed to need attention here. This final superordinate theme of Redundancy Induced Loss examines the subordinate themes: the cuts, personal coping with redundancy, the loss response and planning for redundancy.

8.3 "The current youth work climate is awful" (Michael) - The "cuts"

Most of the youth workers began to talk about the current youth work environment in the first interview as they spoke about their experience of current youth work practice. The response was a bleak one:

> I mean the current youth work climate is awful, as you know… and it's, therefore, the knock-on effect is that we've been cut. And the difficulty we've got, is that we've got very good youth workers…
>
> (Michael 1: 252-254)

8.3.1 Existential questions - You work, "you have a few years left, and then you die." Leading the cuts.

Michael, as a senior leader in his organisation was part of leading the redundancy process, and this organization had opted to reduce hours for staff overall. This was with the aim of it being temporary, in the hope that funding would come in, and this would avoid too many redundancies. Michael was keen to retain as many staff as possible, but it was clear that this is a hard-hitting time. For Michael, this is an experience he has led a few times before, but restructures and redundancies remain a complicated process, especially when working so closely with a staff team.

> I think it's hard when you're… I mean, it's very hard when you … when someone you've worked with for a long time… You basically have a discussion with them... where at the back of your mind, and their mind, you know that either you'll have to make them redundant or that they … they'll voluntarily resign, because they realise that there isn't a job for them.
>
> The conversation with XXX, it was difficult. But he, he made the decision, in a sense… so that made it slightly easier. He decided that he didn't want to apply for the job, so that's easier than him and XXX applying and one of them being made redundant.
>
> In that sense, he made it an easier decision… but no, it is hard… laying people off is not nice. Especially when you'd rather keep them on.
>
> (Michael 1: 410-419)

Michael is trying to make wise choices for the organisation but is taking person-centred approaches to deal with it. When he describes the decision a staff member made about choosing to voluntarily resign you can see this may be due to the deep sense of trust with Michael, or value placed on the organisation and its work. This trust was so strong that they chose to stand down to allow their teammate to have the job. This self-sacrificial attitude made the process easier for Michael.

During the process of redundancy, people often quote “it’s not personal", or “it’s just a role that is disappearing.” However, this affects many people now; it is a concept many of those interviewed have grappled with. For Michael, this is impacting his stress levels, and as he reflects on his spirituality, he begins to question his own life and death.

> To me, people say do you believe in heaven, do you believe in hell? I don't believe in hell, yes, I believe in heaven, and I think heaven starts now. Heaven is part of that journey that we enter into as Christians, and that's part of my faith and belief. t's the living out of the gospel here and now, and that's what I do a bit of, that I feel I should do more of … and then death gets in the way…
>
> But death does get in the way. And then there's a…I suppose that's my waking fear at 3 in the morning is not being there and when I'm stressed and that reoccurring waking whatever comes, but when I'm not stressed, it's not there, and it's not thought about, so why is that?
>
> (Michael 2: 411-418)

Michael’s existential questioning is spiritually reflective looking at his purpose through work and his legacy, but the effects of stress bring the question about mortality into the forefront. The consistent backdrop of cuts, financial pressures and redundancy must be draining many workers, evident in many of the interviews.

Kevin's reflection on the human drive to work and need to be productive in life shows in response to the redundancies he is overseeing, he is also thinking deeply about his own life, work ethic and work productivity.

> Our existence is strangely dominated by this massive drive to work, you know we need to have this structure, it’s linked to time, and you have to spend so much of it being productive for everybody else.
>
> And you do that, and you have a few years left, and then you die! It's not a great use of our time on the planet.
>
> (Kevin 2: 299-302)

The reflective attitude is important as redundancy initiates, or forces, people to re-evaluate what they hope to have done or to do with the rest of their lives. Kevin's senior leadership role has placed him at the centre of some of the decisions around redundancy for his organisation. The balance between making astute financial decisions and trying to keep a service running is a hard one to manage. Kevin's reflection on life purpose regarding work, and our short-lived lives shows once again that the process of redundancy initiates in many of the youth workers a sense of their own mortality.

8.3.2 "They just disappear" (Michael) –statutory and voluntary sector cuts

Michael reflected on the struggles that affected him and the staff personally, especially in the financial realm.

> And it was tough, and it's still tough on… some of them … yeah… it's like anything, you know when you're young. You've got no money… and when you're old you've got no money! (Nervous laugh) Nobodies got any money. And so that dedication is great.
>
> And then you see all the colleagues in the statutory sector just disappear. They just disappear you know they just disappear off the face of it...
>
> (Michael 1: 286-292)

Michael's observation that the *statutory sector workers just disappear* could be likened to the evangelical Christian apocalyptic concept of the rapture – one minute they are there, and the next they are gone. The positive attitude he has, and the dedication his staff team have, is admirable but is hard to sustain for the long term. Ewan, a statutory worker himself, talks about the changes in staffing across his area and the erosion of the statutory youth work identity.

> We still are youth workers, we're still clinging on to that, but there's about eight across the county, so that's it compared to staff that we used to have, so skeleton staff really. And so much work we can't do.
>
> (Ewan 1: 29-31)

The identity of youth work's survival, for Ewan, seemed a strong theme. His frustration at the lack of capacity to work with young people effectively comes through.

> I think we are losing our identity as workers, and we're just that general support thing. It wouldn't surprise me if a few remaining youth workers, statutory, are absorbed into more sort of social work or that sort of field. In the voluntary sector there is less and less I'm aware of, well there's more reliance on volunteers.
>
> (Ewan 3: 185-189)

In the past, the awareness of youth workers in statutory and voluntary sector would have been much higher, with networking events providing opportunities for collaborative working. Now Michael (voluntary sector) and Ewan (statutory) are losing that sense of knowledge of who is working in youth work, in this small geographical area. The shared memory, or network, of youth workers you could trust and work with collaboratively, is being eroded. All the shared working practices are being forgotten and removed as staff leave or are cut.

8.3.3 Worrying about funding

For Sandra, her change in management responsibilities within the austere youth work environment means the conversations at a senior leadership team level are extremely funding orientated. Making sure the organisation is stable is crucial.

> I think, don't put all your eggs in one basket. That's something that I've learnt from [Carol] because she'd been very good at making sure… for example, the Council, they are one of our main funders, but they're not the only funder. So now, that we're facing cuts from the Council, it equates to £60,000, it's not ideal, but it's not the end of the world if that makes sense? Because she's made sure she's got money from other sources.
>
> (Sandra 1: 587-598)

Sandra is learning that the conversations around funding cuts and the subsequent impact on staffing are now a regular part of her management team meetings. These conversations would have been rare previously and are now sitting uneasily with her:

> It's a testing time. We sit around tables, and there are discussions about us all doing a reduction in hours etc. You know, it's serious dialogue that's taking place. And, well I represent my team if I'm voting for reduced hours, then that affects them.
>
> So, I don't know how to sum that up, but I do think, times are changing, times are hard, harder than they were before, nobody's guaranteed funding.
>
> (Sandra 1: 1010-1019)

The spiritual theme of being tested comes through strongly here, with the hope that at some point, the test will be successful, and the ordeal will be over. Without an end in sight, and at the time of writing the Great Recession (Bell and Blanchflower 2011) has now been affecting youth work for ten years, this seems overly hopeful.

Kate summarises the worry many people feel when she talks about her ideal job, which in the past may have been available in both sectors:

> My ideal job would be one where I didn't have to worry about funding. You know maybe that's just where we're at in society at the moment. And in terms of governments.
>
> I don't think wherever you are is going to be a safe option now…
>
> (Kate 1: 359-362)

Feeling unsafe in your work lives is something many of the youth workers spoke about, and as in the "gem*"* (Smith 2011: 6) from Caitlyn, there is a reminiscence to how safe a youth work career used to be.

As with Michael's experience of tough decisions around working hours to save costs, there is a general recognition that, while the *cuts* are hitting the local authority provision, the voluntary sector is also feeling it strongly. George believes the voluntary sector is being impacted even more by the funding reductions

> You know, suddenly you go from being a, sort of…what's the word I'm looking for? Non-subsidiary.
>
> But within communities, the youth service was one of the main programmes. So, you know, your one or two sessions a week are complimenting that; suddenly you find yourself being… it!
>
> But where previously you might have had some support, and some funding…Those doors are closing. In terms of the bigger funding picture that ain't there either.
>
> (George 1: 449-465)

This idea of voluntary sector organisations receiving funding from the local authority, or nationally, has now all but disappeared. And as George hesitates to say that the funding door has closed, he remains slightly optimistic with the concept that *those doors are closing* there is a glimmer of hope that they will still let some funding through, or the doors will reopen, or that the doors are not yet permanently closed.

8.3.4 "Just keep going" (Caitlyn)

Several of the youth workers felt like they had no choice in career direction in their organisations. As Kate describes, there are limited opportunities for career progression. It is crumbling around them.

> I guess I'm fairly stuck, to be honest, there's no central government funding to do anything nice and exciting. I think it's unlikely it's coming around soon, but I do miss that.
>
> I don't really want to work for the local authority; I don't think I fit in the local authority, I fit much better within the voluntary sector.
>
> (Kate 1: 334)

The sense of lack of agency was discussed in the youth work identity section, but the idea you are doing a job that you feel tied into, or you are not able to meet the expectations of work you have set for yourself previously, due to staffing shortages, is a real struggle for many of those interviewed – best shown by Caitlyn:

> Just keep going, just do what you can do just to keep going, at the end of the day I've got sessions that have to be delivered, they've got to be done. There are admin jobs that need to be done, and there are timelines on that.
>
> I'm over the timelines. I'm just telling my managers that I'm struggling with that, can't get it done.
>
> Personally, for me, I kind of feel a little bit annoyed because I like to get everything done, I like to meet my targets.
>
> But I have just accepted the fact that I can't do everything. The things that are a priority have to be done (pause) and they'll be done, things that directly affect people are being done.
>
> (Caitlyn 2: 424-433)

While Caitlyn is an active union member, there is a feeling of acceptance here in terms of the impact this will have on her work with the young people.

> I am involved in campaigning, and you are aware that people you're campaigning with won't be there. So that is quite emotional, and you do feel quite tense about those things.
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 152-155)

She is *just keeping going*, but the question remains how long youth workers will continue with this attitude. Caitlyn's reference to the emotional toll on her personally intimates to her protective nature of herself, and others.

The idea of *just keeping going* is replicated here by Ewan. He talks about his strategies for coping with the repetitive redundancy process. He makes an analogy with surfing: that he must *try and ride this wave*.

> It's very difficult, and I think it's because of the last couple of years of reapplying for the jobs as well. I think I've got to try and ride this wave at the moment.

> I can't see, in terms of development, I don't know what opportunities there are. I don't think there are opportunities in the organisation that I'm in, not for a few years. I think it will come around full circle in the future. If anyone is still left from this round of cuts, and the next round of cuts.
>
> I'm not sure whether I'd want to do anything different, I'm really not sure. I think it has challenged my, sort of, a whole view of a career. Rather than clinging onto a job, which I still enjoy bizarrely considering everything, but I still enjoy the job, still enjoy the work, compared to years and years of not enjoying a job.
>
> (Ewan 1: 164-172)

He returns to the surfing analogy as he talks about *clinging onto the job*, with the idea that he needs to let go of it. Still, he does not finish that thought, as he gets distracted by a reminder that regardless of the struggles, he still enjoys the job. In that sense, the analogy of surfing seems appropriate as a leisure pursuit which at the same time is relentless, with waves regularly presenting themselves. A tiring challenge, but one that involves skill to stay afloat. Ewan's idea that he needs to *try and ride the wave* shows he is actively engaging with the process. It contradicts his *numbness* (discussed later) to the redundancy process, but instead presents a hope that this *will come full circle*.

8.4 Personal Coping with redundancy

All the participants compared redundancy to experiences like loss, grief, or death. The subordinate theme of personal coping with redundancy exemplified many of the workers responses to dealing with the process, and although none of them had been made redundant at this point, all of them felt the pressure of the local restructures and the national demise of youth work. There was a gendered theme around the spiritual concept of grief and loss. All the youth workers spoke about *loss* in response to youth work cuts, but three out of the five men talked about the death of family members, a pet, their own mortality and attending a funeral of a youth work colleague. The discussion of literal death was not evident in the women's interviews in the same way. As many of the conversations about death with the men were quite personal, and in one case brought the participant to tears, they are not quoted here out of respect for their privacy. However, as a theme, it is worth noting this gender difference and to question why this difference arose. It may have been due to the stage of life the three men were at, but this is speculation.

8.4.1 Comparing redundancy with death

Examining the current state of youth work, the participants spoke about redundancy and cuts in a way not dissimilar to death, or grief or loss. In reading many of the quotes, you could simply exchange the topic of redundancy, for that of death or mortality.

In many of the interviews, the comparison between death, or grief or loss could be drawn. Here Kate compares it to the inevitability of death.

> It won't be here for a while. But there's a bit of me that thinks, in terms of, you know, where we are at, and cuts in services; That I wouldn't be surprised if it comes.
>
> It's come before.
>
> (Kate 2: 349-351)

That inevitability about it *coming before*, for Kate, relates to her own experience of being made redundant previously and surviving; this prepared her for what is still to come. The lived experience she has been through already, has helped her cope with the current state; but she is also looking at her other options and her *stuckness* is clear. The concept of *it's come before* could be personified as a grim reaper, the inevitability that it will come again seems to put Kate in a state of waiting for it to happen to her, again.

8.4.2 "I'm really numb to it now" – (Ewan)

For Ewan, being a recipient within the process of yearly budget cuts has also prepared him for what is to come ahead of him. He describes himself as being numb to the process now, and almost disengaged in terms of his loss of power to impact decisions made.

> We have had a meeting this week, and we've been told there might be some [cuts]. 'Cos you get quite blasé about it as well, I don't mean to sound disrespectful, but it might affect some of the part-timers. But knowing the part-timers that I manage, that wouldn't be a huge issue for them. It's not like it's a significant post for them, relying on that income or anything. And it's frustrating for the area, and the fact that they'd be missing out on that work, but comparatively to full-timers losing their jobs, then it should be minimum this year.
>
> But it's quite interesting talking to colleagues, and I know when the talk starts every year, the last three years I'm really numb to it now, it's just, sort of, you know, previous years you get worried about that. Having to go through interviews twice for you doing the same job. So, when it comes around again, it's just like whatever, you'll decide for me if I'm still employed or not.

> And that's quite a bizarre way to feel when you have got, and it sounds really preachy, but when you have got responsibilities for a job that does mean a lot to you.
>
> (Ewan 1: 346-361)

In Ewan's case the part-timers are not within a protective bubble, but he has had realistic conversations with them about the impact of the cuts. For him facing the reality of it is beneficial, but the preparation for redundancy he feels makes him become numb to the process. And in the numbing of himself he is protecting himself from the looming redundancies.

The numbness seems to spread to more people after each round of cuts, by the managers in the local authority enforcing training to re-enthuse people. For the colleagues of Ewan, this lack of appreciation of the stress and strain of regularly being under the threat of redundancy is almost offensive. With the direct result that many of the staff *switch off from* team building activities designed to re-group the remaining workforce:

> And if it does mean a lot to you, but all the changes coming, does it affect your performance in doing the job? Because we had some training straight after the last round of cuts and I missed the first one… but effectively the first day which I missed, which annoyed everyone, was telling everyone: "right, you're still here. You need to, sort of, get motivated, and start performing."
>
> Whereas… I didn't go, but I was told it was like: "you've had, you know, sort of, wallowed in self-pity about it, you've still got a job, you need to start doing this, and this is what we're going to do in this group work thing."
>
> And you could see people just switched off after that, 'cos it means something to them.
>
> (Ewan 1: 362-374)

For Ewan and his colleagues, there is a sense of paying lip service to the management agenda. This is in response to the lack of acknowledgment of the experiences of youth workers living within the current restructures, looming redundancies, and removal of service priorities to young people. Brushing the experiences under the carpet, will not help the staff dealing with it. In comparing redundancy to bereavement, the message heard from colleagues about stopping *wallowing in self-pity* is less than a compassionate response from managers. For the youth workers, as we saw in the section about youth work identity, youth work is a meaningful profession, full of purpose, hope for the young people and a relationship, conversation-based approach. To close conversations with

youth workers about this negative, traumatic experience is out of kilter with the whole ethos of youth work. As these processes go on many of the youth workers talk about a shift away from supporting management decisions.

8.4.3 Loss of trust for management: “I’ve always known who I could or couldn’t trust, and at the moment I’m not sure” (Caitlyn)

Caitlyn too has lost her sense of trust for the management above her. Kevin earlier describes the idea of being able to find allies in the service, but for Caitlyn, this is becoming more difficult:

> I think things will work out for me, that doesn't necessarily mean things will work out for young people or the youth service.
>
> And there is an element of knowing how people with the power above are operating and not being able to trust. It feels uncomfortable because I've always, I've always known who I could or couldn’t trust, and at the moment I’m not sure.
>
> So that doesn’t feel very comfortable, kind of you know I know things will be okay with me because they always are, I might have a few hiccups along the way, but they’ll always be okay. I don’t know what the future will be like.
>
> (Caitlyn 3: 340 – 451)

Caitlyn seems to be returning to partnerships with other organisations she now feels she trusts more than her own. She is ensuring the provision for young people continues but:

> I'm putting things in place that could potentially jeopardise my position. Which is crazy isn't it? But at the moment we are so short-staffed. The only way we can operate is to buy staff in, but if I buy staff in those organisations are going to get to know what we do, the young people, the locations. So, if I were to go, they could just run it, so, but if I don't do this, there will be nothing.
>
> (Caitlyn 3: 340-359)

The idea that working with other organisations is a dangerous choice is a novel concept. Previously this would be seen as positive collaboration, now it can be viewed as providing critical information to competitors. Sadly, Caitlyn is also feeling this is a wrong choice, as it must be affecting the way she thinks about her job. Her values of keeping young people at the heart of the provision are more important than, at this point, loyalty to an organisation she no longer trusts.

8.4.4 The way youth work used to be: “I do miss that…” (Brogan)

The concept of missing, or mourning, for youth work as it used to be, is also evident through Brogan's account of a critical learning experience at University. Her lecturer was talking to her about an approach to youth work that equipped others to continue delivering in the community, young people, or volunteers; he described this approach to youth work as making yourself redundant. She recalls:

> All I could think of was: “I've just got the job, I don't wanna make myself redundant, I've always wanted to be a full-time youth worker. Now I am, and I’m getting paid to do my JNC through the authority, why am I going to make myself redundant?” and didn't quite get the concept, which is quite funny when I look back.
>
> Still, I do miss that community involvement. I do miss street work. I used to deliver a whole detached program; I do miss that. I miss going to the community group forums, and community safety groups and being part of that. I just haven't got the capacity to do it anymore. And I miss meeting new groups of young people and devising the programmes and delivering on them; I do miss that.
>
> The group work side of things, I don't do a lot of group work now, because I've got a youth work student and then I step back and let the youth work student be the main sort of manager of that process from start to finish…
>
> (Brogan 1: 629-639)

Brogan's sense of loss is more related to that natural transition between being a youth worker and then moving into a leadership or management role. Brogan's role in a school setting is different from a community worker post, and she is mourning the loss, and at the same time being happy in her context. For her, the move away from group work was a choice, but now the grief is being relived as she recognises the cuts in youth work provision include whole areas of youth work, such as detached work.

8.5 Planning for redundancy

8.5.1 An uncertain future: “The real dilemma comes if I do get made redundant” (Kate)

To cope with, and plan to an extent for, redundancy the youth workers talk about their tentative plans. At the start of the interview process, Caitlyn's plan was:

> If I were made redundant, I would have gone full time and finished my master’s off.
>
> (Caitlyn 1: 560-561)

But later into the process, she begins to think in more detail about her options.

> For me personally, actually, I could go into anything as long as it was connected to young people. There are loads of opportunities in the council for things like that perhaps a bit more, not necessarily as a manager but a bit more strategic.
>
> Yeah, I'm a bit of a fighter really so I'd like to be shaking people up and standing up for young people.
>
> (Caitlyn 3: 513-515)

Kate reflects on how she came to be in her current role and has not made any plans yet.

> I guess I'm here because I was made redundant and this was the job that was on offer, not sure if I would have applied for it. It is horrendous, isn't it? I've been here six years now. And I have no plans to go anywhere else because I can't see anything as interesting as this.
>
> (Kate 1: 108)

For Kate, she talks about balancing feeling stuck in her job, with providing for her family, and reflecting that her *stuckness* is not enough to propel her into the job market. Whereas the prospect of redundancy would remove her sense of choice to stay.

> Family circumstances have an impact on that, if that weren't an issue, I don't think I would have stayed as long as I had, but I probably won't also be [here].
>
> I'm pretty much stuck here, for the time being, it's not so bad, it's not a bad place to bring up kids so you know that's good, the real dilemma comes if I do get made redundant.
>
> (Kate 1: 389)

8.5.2 “Not getting locked into the world of work” (Kevin)

Whereas, Kevin, who described his only dependents being his (late) cat and dog, had more flexible plans that he could put into place at any point:

> I will either have a complete change, in terms of doing something very different. I’ve got a little campervan, and I'd love to just take off in that, and it’s not something I could live in, but I’ve started thinking of some off the wall ideas, you know.
>
> But there’s something about not getting locked into the world of work …life’s too short for that, and one of the things I’ve managed successfully.
>
> (Kevin 1: 378-388)

Kevin already begins to readjust his sights from work to a more holistic view of life and is keen to make sure he has a right balance. This resilient viewpoint could be a positive effect of the redundancy backdrop; there is the hope of renewal.

8.5.3 “Maybe sometimes things have to die, before something new can grow” (George)

There seems some hope for the future of youth work as Ewan thought things would *come around full circle*. George also feels things will grow anew, out of this youth work death.

> You could see what was going to happen, and maybe sometimes things have to die before something new can grow…
>
> I was there for four years, and it was a real good experience you know in terms of getting to understand working in the statutory sector.
>
> It's strange at the minute, cos you know it's sad what's happening on one level, but on another level, I can understand, the statutory sector became too complacent.
>
> (George 1: 368-388)

For Caitlyn, during the interview period, she has experienced the death of one area of her work, and then something new in its place. But at the hands of the local authority closing the school-based provision and rehousing her in another community-based role. It seemed vital for her to have some control over that – for the benefit of the young people.

> What do you do? Well, you have to do what you think is best at the time. And the centre at the moment is going through a refurb. We're doing it completely on the cheap, and I keep thinking: “am I doing this and then is it going to close? But if I don't do it what happens if it stays open?”
>
> So, this is where, usually I'm pretty confident about where things are going, and I'm not. But in terms of how does that affect my work? I have to be realistic with the young people, but with a positive spin. You know, they’ve not asked the questions, is it going to close? So, I’m not answering the questions.
>
> (Caitlyn 3: 403-410)

8.5.4 How to end well: “it’s a bit like a sticky plaster, pulled off very quickly” (Caitlyn)

The approach to protecting young people and trying to reframe the cuts in a positive light seems familiar. But, as Caitlyn goes onto describe, it can be hard when timelines change, and a sense of a satisfactory ending can sometimes be absent.

> I can talk about leaving the [School Centre], because I’ve left there. So, I knew that time was going to come. And when did I do it? When was the right time to do it? And there was quite a big panic around: “am I going to get all this done?”

> So, I asked for an extension of October. And then I thought about, and I hadn't spoken to the young people about this, I kind of mentioned it that we'd be moving out but felt actually we should be out in the summer. We should just go, that would be the best break.
>
> So, I'd probably say in that respect how things have changed I just drew a line and didn't really give the young people the opportunity to sort of have that closure, because I didn't think it was helpful.
>
> Had the changes not been the way that they were, and it was more of a natural progression in going. "Actually, we are moving on to another place." Then probably I would have had this big farewell do, and it would've been completely different.
>
> But the young people were kind of aware that things were coming to a close. But it was kind of, it's a bit like a sticky plaster, pulled off very quickly …
>
> But if I hadn't of done it that way, we wouldn't have had the staff to keep it open and I think that the way that it would have finished would have been really bitty and it wouldn't have been good.
>
> (Caitlyn 3: 403 – 411)

A satisfactory ending to projects or factoring in what should happen as youth workers leave, seems to be missing within the process of redundancies and closures. The previous way that youth workers handled the ending of short-term projects through celebration events, and staff having leaving parties, is somehow disharmonious with the sudden death of projects and staff contracts.

Often with sudden physical death, or traumatic loss, there are opportunities provided by/for the community most affected. Typically, schools, religious buildings, or community centres provide space for people to remember, reflect, write in a memorial book, or a physical, embodied activity such as lighting a candle. The transferability of these acts of remembrance may need to be thought through, but none of the youth workers talked about a good ending to the death of their work or job.

Considering acts of remembrance, George talks about the death of a colleague and attending the funeral:

> I went to the funeral Friday week, and it's just strange seeing and talking to ex-colleagues. And the amount of people who are just not sure what their future is. And a lot of people, there will be a lot of youth workers who won't be doing youth work or doing paid youth work and I think yeah…what do I think now?
>
> Who knows what the future is, you know, my hope is that things will come full circle? But I think with that, I think there's going to be an awful

> lot of young people (who not necessarily going out to the streets rioting), but who just disappear, cos they don't have relationships, those relationships. And that's not something you can just recreate.
>
> So ever hopeful, but I think there's going to be more pain before that.
>
> I believe there is light at the end of the tunnel.
>
> (George 1: 756-775)

Amidst the attendance of a funeral, remembering the person and celebrating his life, George is still able to see hope for the future of youth work, but not without a realistic assessment of the damage done to its history and heritage. Like Ewan, George also talks about youth work coming full circle.

8.5.5 The end: "When it ends, it ends" (Kevin)

On the themes of funerals, Kevin almost speaks a eulogy for the end of the youth service.

> So, I remain [here] still, possibly to the end. And it might be that we're facing the end shortly, but we shall see.
>
> And I've enjoyed it, you know, it's been great being a part of it, the service; I've thoroughly enjoyed being a part of it.
>
> I've enjoyed the journey, you know, and the progression, the challenges and it's enabled me to develop personally, professionally.
>
> (Kevin 1: 253-259)

His sense of peace and acceptance in this *eulogy* comes through. The verbalisation of an ending into something that can help you to move on, be at peace with the loss, and commemorate, or mark the end, is important for a good death or sense of closure. This act could benefit others going through the process, but like physical death, there is something isolating, or solitary, about the experience.

For youth workers, whose principal value is around connections and relationships, this lonely end seems out of kilter with the way youth work has been lived. A relationship-based ending may be appropriate, and it is sad to consider that in the light of inevitable deaths, this ending is missing. Kevin's peace about the *death of service* is mirrored in his spiritual belief about dying as he reflects on a recent close family bereavement he had faced.

> The whole thing around dying, and when you lose people, wanting to believe you see people again is massively important.
>
> Whereas my world is very clinical when it ends, it ends.

> What you do here is you know… And that's quite liberating you know, but it's also strange. It's almost like a little bit of envy for people who believe there's going to be a heaven.
>
> (Kevin 2: 379-388)

8.5.6 The immortal youth worker

Whereas, for others, that sense of immortality of a profession remains in each of the workers. An almost defiance to continue as youth workers regardless of their job titles, as though youth work is part of their very being, beyond professional identity and into their whole life. The spirituality of youth work is written through the souls of many youth workers. Brogan captures this concept of immortality well here.

> One thing that I'm quite passionate about, and have managed to maintain, is my identity as a youth worker. Because I always refer to myself as a youth worker
>
> (Brogan 1: 198-200)

Brogan's idea of the immortal youth work role, or always referring to herself as youth worker, means that even with the death of a profession in terms of employment opportunities, the profession itself could live on still. With this immortal aspect of youth work continuing within youth workers themselves, their remains hope that the collective memory and continued youth work practice would maybe allow for something new to form out of a perceived death of a profession. There remains hope that this will come full circle.

8.6 Summary

The superordinate theme of Redundancy Induced Loss captures the lived experiences of youth workers as they go through a national youth work restructure. Locally each organisation has different issues to face with funding, restructures, and redundancies. For many of the youth workers the dual identity of youth worker and manager is an added burden, and many are feeling overwhelmed.

The personal coping strategies differ amongst participants, but collectively the closure of youth provisions is causing a loss response to it. The youth workers on the ground, and managers who make restructuring decisions are all trying their hardest to manage budgets and provide services for young people in their areas. The concept of remaining a youth worker regardless of job title, provided an idea of the Immortal Youth Worker.

This sense of a hope for future youth work should be held onto as at the point of writing this thesis there are already some changes in the youth work funding, policy environment and governmental priorities.

The findings chapter has introduced the reader to each of the youth work participants and captured an essence of their youth work and spirituality. In answering the question does spirituality impact on youth work practice four superordinate themes were identified: *Spiritual Needs*, *The Spirit of Youth Workers*, *Changing Youth Work Identity*, and *Redundancy Induced Loss*. The superordinate themes arose out of the IPA and are illustrated throughout with quotes from the participants who most clearly demonstrate that theme. The findings chapter was divided into four sections, and it was clear throughout each section the experience of spirituality amongst the youth workers was impacting on their own career pathways, identities, and priorities as they worked with young people.

The data generated within this process has been extremely rich and there have been some experiences from individuals which have not featured in the superordinate themes. In capturing some of the individuals as case studies this may have illuminated some of these, but that is for another article.

In hearing the lived experiences of the individual youth workers, they have brought to life the current youth work context in their individual settings. This may resonate with some people but cannot necessarily be generalised to a wider population, as IPA is not designed to do this. But the reader may connect with sections in reflecting on their own experiences of spirituality and youth work.

The discussion chapter will look to draw out what the findings mean considering the literature and establish the original contribution of this research.

Chapter 9: Discussion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings presented in the previous chapters. As suggested by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), the discussion will take the format of addressing each of the superordinate themes identified in the findings. They suggest that in IPA research:

> the interview and analysis will have taken you into new and unanticipated territory. Usually, the most exhilarating part of the analysis is that which is completely unexpected … You are likely to need to do some extra literature searching after you completed your analysis in order to frame this new angle that has developed.
>
> (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009: 113)

It is evident in this chapter that a search for extra literature is needed to compare the parallel helping professions, in considering approaches to spirituality in youth work, and the change situation of redundancy. This will be discussed further in the context of the findings from the interviews.

This discussion chapter will follow the structure of a matrix presented by Goodson (2017). It will take each finding, compare the similarities and differences with other studies, connect this to my findings and then link to theory. Finally, for each finding, the question *So What?* will be answered for future researchers, theory and youth work practice. Following this, the limitations of the research study will be examined, drawing out the contribution this has made to the field of youth work and spirituality.

To begin this chapter, I will initially return to the aim and objectives of the research. I will then discuss the findings in the previous chapters following the order of the superordinate themes: *Spiritual Needs*, *The Spirit of Youth Workers* and *Changing Youth Work Identity.* Finally, focussing on the loss response to restructures, cuts to funding and redundancy, drawing on the final findings chapter *Redundancy Induced Loss*. This will establish the value and impact these findings have on youth work practice as found within the evidence base in this research.

9.1.1 Aims and Objectives recap

To recap, this research aimed to explore youth workers' experiences of spirituality and its impact on their youth work practice. There were three objectives in the data collection phase that aimed to help with that:

1. To identify youth workers' experiences of youth work practice.
2. To explore youth workers' experiences of spirituality.
3. To capture youth worker connections between spirituality and their youth work.

Each objective was addressed through IPA and the resulting superordinate themes arose out of the participant data. The next section will examine the superordinate themes in turn and link them to the objectives as the discussion unfolds.

9.2 Spiritual Needs

From the interviews, I found that the youth workers in secular contexts were spiritually self-aware of their own spiritual needs in youth work organisations. They could express spiritual experiences in the first person and were comfortable exploring their own spirituality or perceived lack of it. Drawing on their individual spiritual experiences, they identified three primary areas of spiritual need in common: safe places, a regular rhythm and connection to others. Finding and going to safe places to reflect was a proactive spiritual part of their day. The youth workers often used spiritual practices at the start or end of their days as a regular rhythm. They also expressed a need to connect with others through the support of colleagues and young people. This need was shown by both those who called themselves spiritual and those who did not at the beginning of the research. The youth workers' spiritual needs, and responses to them, impacted their youth work practice positively and protectively.

The youth workers described a wide variety of spiritual practices that met their spiritual needs. Going to places or engaging in a regular rhythm was an active decision where youth workers could reflect in specific locations (Fisher 1998) or identified activities. As with Sweatman and Heintzman's (2004) study about the connection with spirituality and outdoor residential camps, most recognised these places and activities enabled them to have something spiritual beyond the ordinary meaning of an everyday spirituality (Pittman 2007). In mindfulness practice, this would be attending to the present moment (Kabat-Zinn 2013). Daily routine activities such as walking the dog (Kevin), feeding the birds (Brogan), going to the gym (Sandra), going for a run (Kate) or in the shower

visualising lights of protection and positivity (Caitlyn) helped their spiritual self-awareness. Activities such as taking a youth work retreat (George), going to the hills and mountains (Kevin and Michael), or Glastonbury festival as a spiritual refreshment (Caitlyn) helped them feel spiritual. Building in regular spiritually reflective moments in the day, in every day, was helpful to bring perspective.

In this research, the *spiritual places*, *rhythms*, and *connections with others* are not seen as an escape from this world (Rowson 2017), but they are grounded in everyday spirituality. Bone, Cullen, and Loveridge found in New Zealand early childcare settings, that when "everyday spirituality permeates early childhood contexts … the spiritual experience of everyone connected to that setting is supported" (2008: 1). As the youth workers have shown, their spiritual needs are evidenced in everyday spirituality: the places, the routines, and the connections they make with others.

The findings from this research evidence the need for youth workers to consider spirituality themselves. By remembering spiritual moments, childhood experiences, or attending to previously *unattended moments* (Paffard 1976) they can identify spirituality more clearly within their ordinary everyday life. I advocate spending time thinking about spirituality to help prepare for working with young people in this area. This is backed up by literature within parallel professions, notably in counselling (Carroll 2014; West 2004) and education (Erricker, Ota, and Erricker 2001; Palmer 2003). The need to attend to spiritual experiences is reflected by Caitlyn via the opportunity to talk in this way through the research project, as she acknowledged the previous lack of attention to spirituality:

> You don't talk about spirituality per sé, you might talk about different things to different people, and it may come up in conversation, but it's been really…I've found it really enlightening. Really reflecting on what does spirituality really mean to me. How does it influence my practice, how do I know…? So, I've found it a really useful experience. I've really enjoyed taking part in the study as well, so thank you.
>
> (Caitlyn 3: 628-632)

The findings showed the spiritual opportunities were often unplanned, but the confidence to draw on this *in the moment* can be a consequence of the preparation. In youth work, informal education (Jeffs and Smith 2005) advocates for youth workers to be spontaneous with opportunities in cultivating learning experiences (Jeffs and Smith 2005, 2010) which is also relevant in spirituality.

The youth workers' personal daily and spiritual patterns seemed to mirror how the youth workers saw spirituality within their work with young people. With George, Michael, Kate, Ewan, and Caitlyn all talking about the benefits of taking young people to different environments in nature – whether on outdoor pursuits residentials (Ewan and Kate); taking young people out to a large outdoor space in an evening session to *run free* (Caitlyn); or taking young people to international settings (Michael, George, Peter, Kevin). These activities helped shape young people's spiritual development and impacted youth workers who experienced this with young people.

In reflecting through this research process, the youth workers were able to recognise their daily patterns and to see gaps in their rhythms they needed to improve. The opportunity to see how they had constructed the spiritual rhythms attached to specific locations was a vital research outcome. In some cases, the need for a safe space to reflect after work, balanced the lack of physical safety felt in the workplace (Brogan). For others, the lack of emotional safety in the workplace sparked the need for spiritual practices that attempted to redress this (Caitlyn). As George described, his supervisor used nature walks as the setting for his regular supervision, and he found this beneficial and inspiring. The way nature, space, or place is integrated with spiritual practices was observed in current practices and considered in contemplating future working patterns. There is a large body of research around the benefits and social value of outdoor spaces (Worpole and Knox 2007) and outdoor education (Ogilvie 2012), links to informal education (Jeffs and Ord 2017) and in youth work (Harris-Evans 2017; Humberstone 2012).

The youth workers mentioned the importance of place, to keep the young people safe and help them feel like they have ownership of the area, including youth centres, and spaces in schools designated for work and staff supervision. This is reflected in youth policy where safety is in the value of Stay Safe in Every Child Matters (DfES 2003). Having security in a work base was prominent in Brogan and Caitlyn's experiences in school-based youth work and the need for an office space to meet with people and work quietly. The youth workers' identity through space was important, as in detached youth work theory of meeting young people where they are at (Whelan 2010). However, it was clear in many of the interviews that the youth workspaces were being sold, closed, moved, or changed somehow. This act of detaching the person from the space they embody to conduct their work is an unacknowledged part of the redundancy process in

youth work. The youth workers who worked hard to create a safe space for young people had lost that space. The young people no longer associated that space with the experiences of youth work.

The consideration of space and place as a location for spiritual experiences is important for young people or youth workers. This thesis found that awareness of youth work's space, context, and the location was also a critical spiritual need the youth workers. An acknowledgement of space's role in creating belonging, meaning, and safety for staff and young people was apparent. This sense of belonging through the place is a crucial finding of connecting with others. Belonging is a key theme in the context of belief or religion (Day 2011). Religions acknowledge the importance of place with places of worship and gathering in a community (Heelas and Woodhead 2004). For youth work, the value of place-based work is classically seen as crucial to create a strong identity to centre-based youth provision, and the youth workers interviewed in this thesis agreed this was important.

The youth workers identified strongly with the idea of connecting with others (Fisher 1998). With one of the core aspects of youth work being to build relationships with young people, communities, and other organisations (Jeffs and Smith 2005), it seemed inevitable this would be a strong theme in the findings. Many talked about their supervisors who would meet with them regularly, and for George, this was a spiritual experience of mentoring in nature. In contrast, Michael was aware of the reduction in available mentors, or non-managerial supervisors (Carroll 2014), that he could meet with due to restructures and cuts. He mourned the loss of that to the sector, and he saw the need to have someone he could meet with to talk about youth work and spirituality. It seemed essential to Michael in his spiritual journey, and he reflected on key youth work role models in his early career and own Christian conversion experiences.

The literature suggested spirituality was a difficult topic for youth workers to address or explore (Green 2006, 2015). However, this thesis's findings show that the youth workers connected with spirituality, even if it was hard for them to verbalise as they discussed their struggles. As found in researching spirituality with young people (De Souza 2003; Hay and Nye 2006), spiritual fluency can be encouraged by listening to the youth workers and acknowledging spiritual experiences, rather than avoiding reflecting on them. Recommendations from much of the research around youth work practice and spirituality

have found providing *space to listen* to young people is a key implication for practice (Dallas 2009; Green 2006; McFeeters 2010; Nemko 2006; Rankin 2005). This research builds on those findings and finds that having this space to be listened to should be applied to youth work practitioners. The youth workers found the interview experience valuable, as George reflected on the opportunity to take part in the regular, reflective interviews:

> I think sometimes you don't create enough space just to be, yeah, taking a step back. So, keep on doing what you're doing. I think it's really important.
>
> (George 2: 301-304)

Over the three interviews, all the youth workers recognised improved spiritual fluency, or spiritual inquiry competence (Hand 2003). As captured by Ewan at the beginning of the third interview:

> I think if we had done this session without doing the other two sessions, I would have answered differently. Because I would have, in my head, understood spirituality, thinking: "I'm not particularly spiritual." It would be because I associate it with religion rather than anything else.
>
> But after the two other sessions, I'd probably say now that it's more morals and values for me, but otherwise, there wouldn't be an answer for you.
>
> (Ewan 3: 104-110)

For some, it was a return to *attending* (Paffard 1976) to spirituality that had been missed or forgotten. This research encouraged the youth workers to reflect aloud with little direction, which enabled the youth workers to examine spirituality themselves and learn as they reflected (Bolton and Delderfield 2018). Similarly, Elbow (1973) describes the discipline of *writing to know* what you think; this process enabled the youth workers to *speak to know*. Within the 3 phases of interviews, the youth workers could read their interview transcripts and check for accuracy. With the added benefit, they revisited what they said and re-reflected on their spirituality. It became clear the youth workers could express their spiritual experiences and displayed spiritual needs in their daily everyday lives, concurring with Pittman (2007), who found spirituality was an everyday occurrence.

The concept of developing spiritual fluency through training was found in the research with faith-based and community-based youth workers in the USA (Scales et al. 1995). A need for training was also identified by Garza, Artman, and Roehlekepartain (2007) in *Common Ground* and Roehlekepartain (2007) in *Building Bridges.* However, this thesis

found rather than seeing the solution to developing youth workers spiritually through education or training, spiritual fluency could be developed through conversation, as in the three phases of interviews.

Discussing the findings in response to other research in this area and the connections or theory, we consider the *So What?* (Goodson 2017) for research, theory and/or practice.

9.2.1 Further research

It would be worth extending this research further around *place, needs and connections.* The concept of youth workers' daily spirituality is worth exploring further, mainly because of the discipline-specific similarities these youth workers showed. The alignment with the youth work professional values (Banks 2010), ethical practice (NYA 2004), and formational policy documents such as Youth Matters (DfES 2005) and Youth Matters Next Steps (DfES 2006) is apparent in the interpretation here - but not directly linked to by the youth workers. In the findings, the spiritual needs are to a place, rhythm, and connection to others; in policy, it is as *Somewhere to go, Something to do, and Someone to talk to* (DfES 2006). It shows an internalisation of the youth work values (Banks 2010; NYA 2004) and aspirations, into values that are arguably spiritual in the spiritualised concept of needs (Rowson 2017). It may be useful to examine in detail youth workers daily rhythms through diary reflections to reveal more detail of those spiritual needs.

The concept of place for youth workers could open the opportunity for more creative, visual, or arts-based research as they attached meaning to some of those spiritual places relevant to their own reflection or work with young people. Considering the use of visual techniques may encourage dialogue around spirituality between young people and youth workers. A photographic methodology (Butler-Kisber 2010), such as Photovoice (Sutton-Browne 2014; Wang and Burris 1997), could capture this experience of spirituality with youth workers. The Photovoice process could be used within a research project to engage young people, youth workers and the local community by taking photos of the focused theme. A critical discussion around the pictures, choosing photographs to be used in storytelling, putting into themes, and sharing with a wider community would be contextual and social outputs (Butler-Kisber 2010).

9.2.2 Adding to the theory

This youth workers based in secular contexts were spiritually fluent. Even those who were initially unsure if they would have much to contribute to a study on spirituality found as they engaged, over time, with the interview process, they were able to explore their spirituality. In IPA (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) with spiritual experiences, the interviews' structure remained without interviewer prompts beyond the initial questions. However, instead, the flow of the conversation was followed. In doing so, the youth workers, through speaking, reflected on spirituality and in this came to know what they saw as spirituality. Although this is an individualistic perspective to spirituality, the individual experiences and shared spiritual themes may resonate with the reader. The implications for spirituality research show it is possible to research others' experiences without a given spiritual definition: what spirituality does rather than just what it is (King 2009). The youth workers drew on their spiritual heritage (Dallas 2009) and the societal understanding of spirituality (Jupp and Flanagan 2007) to piece together their own experience. This research is qualitative and non-scientific but adds to the theoretical field of spirituality that debates definitions and often places boundaries to guide the scientific study of religion (Koenig, King and Carson 2012). However, this IPA study's qualitative, idiographic nature roots this firmly in youth work practice.

9.2.3 Practice implications

Most youth workers felt their interview experience gave them a space to reflect on career and spirituality and a regular marker to reflect on progress and change. In the previous section, the need to accompany or listen to the youth workers into the future was evidenced. The idea of youth workers having access to a spiritual youth work mentor has previously been suggested (Michael, George, Caitlyn, Brogan). A spiritual director or pastoral care (Madsen Gubi 2015) would be available for youth workers in faith-based settings. This thesis found for those outside a spiritual environment, the taking a reflective spiritual journey with someone would be beneficial. All the youth workers reflected on the research process as positive and helpful to their practice.

Glimpsing the youth workers' experiences of spirituality in youth work is achieved through the participants' willingness to engage and the phenomenological approach to listening (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). Becoming spiritually self-aware has occurred by reflecting on their current spiritual experiences, spiritual heritage (Dallas 2009) and considering what spirituality means for the youth worker (Green 2006). The youth

workers' spirituality became apparent for each person as they spoke about the need to find places to reflect, described daily spiritual rhythms, and connected with others, be it, young people or colleagues. Becoming spiritually self-aware may be enhanced by using resources that educate about religions, spiritual definitions or spiritual practice, as Ewan indicated he would like to pursue later.

In returning to the question: does spirituality impact youth work practice? The concept of spiritual needs and youth work values are tightly entwined for the youth workers interviewed. They evidenced in their spiritual needs the youth work policy values that underpin work with young people. This absorption of the youth work value base, to become personal values, is arguably spiritual. This shows they are hard to untangle, such that youth work and spiritual experiences co-exist within youth workers.

9.3 The Spirit of Youth Workers

My findings show the youth workers in this study all had a strong sense of purpose that resulted in them making a difference in young people's lives. The notion of purpose, meaning, and calling to a youth work career came up in most interviews. Many of the youth workers were clear their move to youth work was a life choice and had become part of who they inherently were – a large part of their identity. When the youth workers were asked about their youth work journey, many linked their entry into youth work to a calling: whether that was a religious notion of calling from God, or a higher being to serve the community, or a secular one from within the individual to make a difference to oneself and the community (Hall and Chandler 2005). Advances in secular career development theory are beginning to examine the link with a religious view of calling and career development (Frigerio 2016). In examining the findings from this thesis, the youth workers linked to their sense of purpose, a peace, the difference to young people and a feeling of being meant to be in such a job. This ties together as a spirit of youth work, identifying what makes these secular youth workers similar in their careers and outlooks.

The concept of calling is often seen as a religious notion. Yet, in these secular contexts, the youth workers talked about entry into the profession using spiritual or religious language. With most feeling a strong lead into youth work: George found his *predestined path* in many of his job moves; Sandra heard *the call* to work with communities and people in the voluntary sector; Peter felt *God call him* to a different country. In her current youth workplace, Caitlyn felt she was *meant to be*. With vocation more likely linked to a

call to the priesthood (Sheldrake 2012), Hall and Chandler broadly define *calling* as "work that a person perceives as purpose in life." (Hall and Chandler 2005: 160). It is worth considering the challenges and strengths, that a deep sense of call, or vocation, can bring to youth workers. For some, the idea of a calling is only a luxury for those able to respond to it (Frigerio 2016); it also connects with Weber's Protestant Work Ethic (Weber 2014). Feeling *called* may be protective when dealing with worries about change, as Caitlyn exhibited in the story around a shooting with a young person in her youth work area and the safety she felt because she was meant to be there. But it might prevent the youth worker from being more active in challenging any injustice or change. There may be a feeling of acceptance because it is *meant to be* that quiets the voice of challenge.

There have been several vocational research studies with those in the helping professions linking spirituality and calling to their career purpose. In research with students at the start of their careers in social work (Freeman 2007), counselling (Hall, Burkholder, and Sterner 2014), nursing (Raatikainen 1997) and teaching (Durka 2002), the link to calling or spirituality and career is strong. But there is also a call to look beyond an initial call and critically evaluate their perspective (Freeman 2007) as they learn and develop as practitioners. In research with teachers Gillespie (2017) found spirituality and vocation were a positive agential resource that should be drawn on more often as they work in that career.

The benefits of perceiving a career calling can be found in the resulting commitment, meaning, and job satisfaction (Duffy, Reid and Dik 2010; Duffy and Dik 2013); most youth workers, in this thesis, displayed this well. In contrast, Ewan saw his move into youth work as a *lucky break* and Kate as a direct result of a previous redundancy relocation; or as Hayes (2012) calls of herself – The accidental youth worker. In these accounts, they did not reflect the spiritual language of a *calling*. In talking about their jobs, they displayed gratitude, but they also described a feeling of *stuckness* or inability to move on from their current roles. Their commitment to youth work was high, and although they did not feel called, they felt able to ride this storm (Ewan). As with teachers who felt spirituality and calling brought in more agency in their roles (Gillespie 2017), further research into the impact of feeling called to a career in youth work in a secular or faith-based context would aid the inclusion of spirituality within the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work (CLD 2019) and in youth work training.

There is a lack of research around *calling* in youth workers in vocational or career development research, in examining this finding. However, there has been a notable increase in research around calling in the last five years (Frigerio 2016). More generally, there is a lack of research with youth workers about their practice (De St Croix 2106). With some recent examples capturing youth workers' stories of practice (UNISON and UNITE 2011), collected real and created stories of youth work practice (Krueger 2004) and interviews, dialogue and research diaries that bring youth work to life in practice (De St Croix 2016). There are more accounts of youth work practice, but this has been heuristic (Moustakas 1994). Reflective accounts of personal practice (Caley 2019) or journeys into youth work (Hayes 2012) rather than research on, or with, youth workers. Sawbridge and Spence (1991) interviewed women youth and community workers in the North of England and showed the men's dominance in youth work. In the research with youth workers, there is little to no mention of the youth workers' routes into practice, the concept of calling, or the impact of spirituality on this. Sawbridge and Spence (1991) touch on the career aspirations of the women they interviewed but found for many women, at that point in the late eighties, entry into youth work was accidental and through part-time opportunities.

A notable exception is the research by Anderson-Nathe (2010) with youth workers about their practice and moments of *not knowing what to do.* It does make some links to vocation and calling; however, it is at a crisis point as it turns to burnout. Anderson-Nathe's (2010) research shows *not knowing what to do* can result in a *vocational crisis* and result in the youth worker leaving the profession. Anderson-Nathe recognises

> youth workers talk about being called to the profession, feeling compelled in some way to commit their lives to working with and on behalf of young people.... [the calling] sustains many youth workers through difficult personal and professional moments... [but] the sense of moral commitment also holds the potential to introduce significant emotional pain, existential struggle and vocational doubt
>
> (Anderson- Nathe 2010: 100-101).

My research findings around the youth workers' keen sense of calling and purpose at the start of their careers, as recalled well into their careers, adds to the conclusion of Anderson-Nathe (2010). It invites further research around the initial entry into youth work and calling; like the research with students in other professions and spirituality (Durka 2002; Freeman 2007; Hall, Burkholder, and Sterner 2014; Raatikainen 1997) this could focus on youth workers' entry to the field, and motivation or calling.

9.3.1 Further research

Many introductory youth work texts explore the definitions, purpose, and role of youth work (Sapin 2013; Wood 2014), but there is a notable lack of attention to career calling, vocation, or routes into youth work. Even within faith-based texts (Nash 2012), there is a lack of attention to youth workers' vocation, focusing on faith-based youth workers' role to support young people in their vocational searches. For all the youth workers interviewed in this research, their training in youth work and experiences to date affected their career identity at this time of change. There was immense job satisfaction in improving young people's lives either directly or via the supervision and management of youth workers. The passion these workers all had for their work is evident throughout all the interviews. These youth workers' spirit was positive, passionate, and purposeful – they all felt a deep satisfaction in the life-changing work with young people. Further research about the impact of spirituality and calling on youth work career at different points, moments of crisis, and other key events in youth work could also be beneficial. E.g. How do youth workers perceive their calling to the profession, and how does this impact their contribution to society?

9.4 A Changing Youth Work Identity

A smaller but still significant finding was how the youth workers saw their youth work identity amid change. They all found the process of reflecting on their career beneficial and not something they had done for a while. This finding came about as a direct result of the first interview phase that asked the youth workers to talk about their youth work career. The first phase was initially introduced in the interviews to encourage the youth workers to feel comfortable, build a relationship with me, and talk about something they would be fluent in. Although the youth workers were under threat of redundancy, they did not revisit their curriculum vitae in preparation for job moves. All the youth workers took the opportunity to reflect on their careers, making sense of the direction and examined their past, present, and future career pathways. As expected, they could speak fluently about this, and without exception, these were the most extended interviews of free-flowing narrative. Given the data's richness, it is worth discussing this significant aspect of the research and how this could apply to practice and be taken further in future research.

This 18-month reflective period was useful, and many of the youth workers self-imposed a coaching approach (Whitmore 2017) on their interactions in this research process.

They set themselves targets to grow professionally before we next met; these were around further training, application forms to study, and re-prioritising completing qualifications (Sandra, Michael, Caitlyn, and Kate). The drive for personal growth and professional training was high. Many of the youth workers were completing additional qualifications on top of their JNC. The qualifications included youth work Dip. HE/Degree/Masters, the Institute for Fundraising, in Leadership and Management, Sexual Health work, Voluntary Sector Management, Project Management, Counselling, Public Policy and a PhD.

For most of the youth workers, busyness and finding time were critical issues in their work. They lacked space for professional or personal development, and they were unhappy with this balance. The interviews every three months were refreshing for many and helped them move forward in their careers. Although not the purpose of the interviews, this was a beneficial outcome for the participants. With the lack of non-managerial supervision in the sector (Carroll 2014), youth workers took this opportunity to grow. The interviews showed growth and purpose in their careers, but the difficulty was making sense of their career trajectory.

The professionalisation of youth work, making it a degree entry pathway, was a key debate in the UK in the early 2000s (Ord 2011, Nicholls 2012), which took the youth workers' identity and aligned it with a professional qualification. Although there is a debate around the role of paid professional youth workers and volunteers, my thesis has shown for these youth workers the strength of their identity in youth work was of note. In 2007, Spence called for youth workers in secular contexts to take note of the faith-based youth workers' language of practice that incorporated "affective, emotional and interpersonal aspects" (Spence 2007: 16) to allow the youth work field to flourish. My research has shown a fluency in speaking about youth work identity through the lens of spirituality could continue to be beneficial for all youth workers. However, the youth workers' career path was diversifying in the changing youth work landscape (Pozzoboni and Kirshner 2016) as societal needs changed and encompassed social work, mental health work, careers support, and more targeted youth support.

The youth workers had all avoided being victims of redundancy, and some had been creative in their responses to develop their opportunities. As described in the literature

review, the concept of Ikigai (Garcia and Miralles 2017), the purpose and meaning to life from Japan, can be applied to the youth workers interviewed.

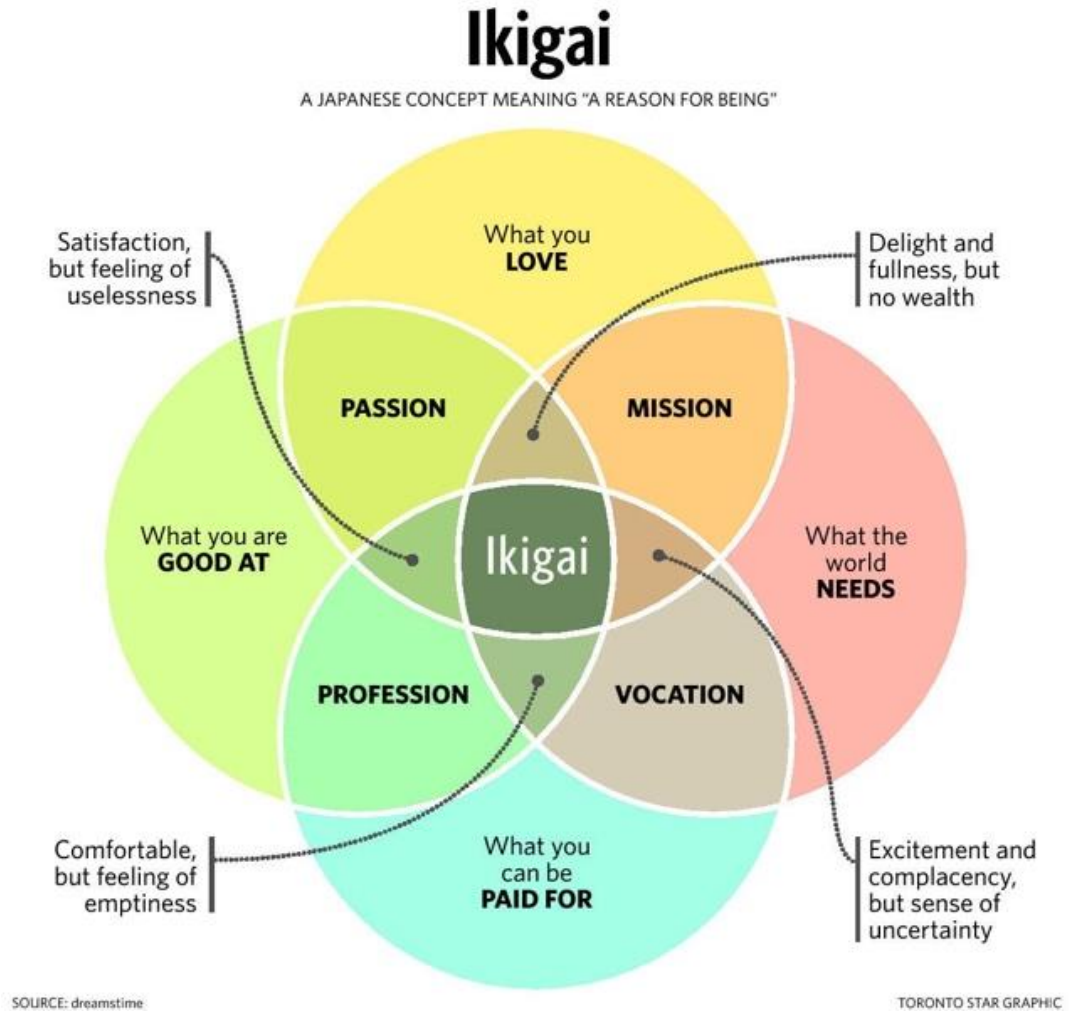

Figure 8 - Ikigai: A Japanese concept meaning a reason for being

The concept of Ikigai could be newly applied to youth work - that youth work is *a reason for being* within their careers. Regardless of a job role change, many of the youth workers continued to identify as youth workers. Could the resiliency or positive spirit of most of the youth workers be because of their spiritual purpose or calling to their youth worker lives? Youth work was a fundamental part of who they were, and it exuded from them during the interviews. The model of Ikigai could also be used to examine the effects of redundancy on youth workers. When they were no longer paid for their work, would they continue to volunteer? Had they then “delight, but no wealth” (Garcia and Miralles 2017)?

As the participants spoke about spirituality and their identity in youth work, could take a *retrospective point of view* (Parys, Smith and Rober 2014) of their childhood spiritual experiences. For some, this reflected their childhood conversion stories (Michael, Peter), and for others, childhood religious experiences (Brogan, Ewan, Kate, Kevin, Sandra). A recollection of their own *spiritual heritage* (Dallas 2009, Green 2006) helped the youth workers to remember historical influences on their own spiritual needs. For some, this could have been a painful experience as they recollected or relived an abusive religious past, they may have been previously silent about (Crisp 2007; Crisp 2010; Crisp 2012). This study did not have any disclosures of any abuse, but given the prevalence, it should be considered when exploring spirituality in youth work practice. The youth workers' consideration of their spiritual heritage (Dallas 2009, Green 2006) and their more recent spiritual experience helped them become more spiritually self-aware throughout the interviews.

The process of the interviews over 18 months captured the participants' drive for growth, their own reflective professional development, and the high aspirations they have for the young people and their staff teams. This youth work spirit also usefully helps the individuals to see a future beyond where they are now. The *growth mentality* seen in the youth workers could be linked to the concept of *self-actualisation* (Maslow 1943); Spirituality is linked to learning and development as individuals strive for meaning and purpose in life. With the humanistic perspective, there is an acknowledgement "both people in and out of religious walks can be on journeys of spiritual growth" (Howard 2002: 233).

9.4.1 Practice implications

For all the youth workers, redundancy was not yet a direct factor; although they were influenced by the process and cuts going on around them, they still had a strong and hopeful spirit for their work with young people. In becoming more spiritually self-aware through the interviews, Ikigai may be useful to reflect on with youth workers. As a protective model delving into a reason for being, it may help those relocating to alternative helping professions such as teaching or social work. Their youth work identity would continue, and their Ikigai could still be in youth work or work with young people.

The opportunity to reflect on their career pathways, their purpose or meaning to life and spirit does not arise very often. As described earlier becoming spiritually self-aware

would help youth workers consider their spirit, identity, and purpose in life. Reflecting on where they would position themselves in the Ikigai diagram (Garcia and Miralles 2017) could help consider the next steps in their careers.

9.4.2 Future research

The career narratives that arose out of the interviews were of interest in themselves. They mentioned spiritual experiences, childhood conversion stories, and career journeys in youth work. This could be explored in more depth with more youth workers using narrative approaches to research (Bold 2011). Narrative inquiry (McIsaac Bruce 2008) could be used as an alternative methodology with the benefit of hearing the youth work stories to expand on the youth work participants' career narrative. Further exploration of this area highlighted in this research would help inform youth workers about their career journeys and others considering a youth work career; It would help provide deeper insight into what youth workers do, and who they are and why they do it.

9.5 Redundancy Induced Loss

The final finding within this study was an unexpected outcome of the research. It resulted from the youth work climate at that time, of cuts and restructures to the sector (UNISON 2011; UNISON 2014; UNISON 2016). When asked about spirituality, I found the youth workers, about their experience of redundancy and in turn linked that to loss. For some youth workers, the question of spirituality triggered reflections on recent bereavements, including colleagues, relatives, and pets. The interviews were a safe and secure place for the youth workers to reflect on the sensitive topics of loss and grief and contemplate existential questions. This research study was designed to be longitudinal to capture the change in the sector and youth work experiences at that time. When they were asked about spirituality, the frequency and depth the participants talked about redundancy and loss made this an unexpected and meaningful finding. There were three main groupings within the findings: the nature of the cuts and the youth workers response to that, their own personal coping with it, and planning for redundancy.

The concept of grief and redundancy has previously been linked with a call for employers to more thoughtfully consider humanity within the redundancy process and to recognise the loss effects this may have on the staff as they are made redundant or awaiting decisions (Chick 2009; Davey, Fearon and McLaughlin 2013; Vickers 2009). It is little wonder this link with grief and redundancy exists as research links the language of

"layoffs" with death. The review showed the literature on layoffs "tends to be clustered around the experiences of 'survivors,' 'executioners' and 'victims'" (Vickers and Parris 2010: 58). For those being made redundant unhelpful euphemisms have emerged:

> Workers might be downsized, separated, severed, unassigned, proactively outplaced, slashed, cut, eliminated, excessed, rightsized, surplused, severed, trimmed, re-engineered, pared down, terminated, chopped, given early retirement or put out to pasture...being laid-off involves feeling as if one has been 'disposed of' by one's employer, rather than being treated with dignity and respect.
>
> (Vickers and Parris 2010)

Concerning staff well-being in redundancy, Kubler-Ross' grief cycle has been linked to unexpected change at work (Chick 2009). Chick (2009) locates the Kubler-Ross "cycle of grief change model" with Human Resources professionals in mind. Addressed briefly in the literature review, but to recap, the stages are Denial and Isolation, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance (Kubler-Ross 1970). There is a recognition:

> managers leading the process fail to communicate the situation appropriately; they neglect the well-being of staff leaving the company and they fail to re-engage with remaining staff quickly enough, so employees are fearful and unmotivated, which impacts on business productivity.
>
> (Chick 2009: 27)

Knowing the grief cycle can help managers support employees through the grief stages, both "those leaving and those who remain," with encouragement to managers to "get employees to the final stage of acceptance quickly" (Chick 2009: 27). This is also applied to those who have survived redundancies to motivate and move forward the workforces as soon as possible, with the motivation to prioritise the staff's productivity.

As Ewan described, his youth work colleagues were de-motivated by the management attempt to "re-engage with the remaining staff" (Chick 2009: 27); and, with Caitlyn, distrust of management. Michael and Kevin spoke frankly about the difficulties of being in power to move the workforce forward. Understanding a grief model of change to humanise redundancy is important (Vickers 2009). Still, with youth workers already engaged with profoundly personal work with young people, the call for handling redundancy and cuts with compassion is more critical – a Spiritually Compassionate approach to Redundancy.

In much of the redundancy, layoff, and cuts research, the focus is on business redundancy within merger and acquisition. In some cases fast, involuntary redundancy where workers must pack their desks up immediately before being escorted off the premises (Vickers 2009). For the youth workers interviewed, the period of ending or moving on was not as drastic. In the local authorities' cases, with Ewan, Kevin, Caitlyn, a prolonged period of change occurred. There was a sense of anticipating the change, but that it was not yet fully present.

9.5.1 Nature of the cuts

The study's participants consisted of local authority, voluntary sector, and school-based youth workers. Although each had a different job role, there was much similarity in their current experience and responses. For the local authority youth workers (Kate, Ewan, Kevin, Caitlyn), the critical point was they were aware of the need to reduce budgets going forward. In response to the central government's austerity drive, local authorities were being asked to make cuts that prioritised local need. The staff were now familiar with the redundancy process and had all survived so far but were unaware of whether they would be the next *victims* (Vickers 2009) of redundancy. The instability described by the participants explained they and colleagues had to reapply for their roles annually; a once secure career was now more precarious (Furlong et al. 2018; MacDonald 2016).

The youth workers' responses varied from feeling stuck (Kate) or numb to the redundancy cycles (Ewan) to remaining hopeful they would be relocated to similar work (Caitlyn). These workers all knew more cuts were likely, but not aware of when, or if, these would affect them. They were repetitive survivors of redundancy and possible victims in the next round of cuts. Vickers' (2009) research with senior-level business executives around redundancy found that organisations were frequently unaware of workers' grief. While research is about youth workers rather than business executives, it is worth considering if youth work organisations or employers recognise the workplace grief experienced by youth workers going through redundancy. Many of the youth workers interviewed showed evidence of typical grief stages (Kubler-Ross 1970) and a sense of anticipatory grief (Vickers 2009) about the possible job cuts.

"Anticipatory grief" (Thompson 2012) is found in death studies, where a person is given a terminal diagnosis, the family of the patient often describe grieving before a loss has happened (Davenport and Matthews 2003). The concept of anticipatory grief can also

be a symptom of downsizing in organisations. For Ewan, Brogan, Kate, Kevin and Michael, the links between their feelings of loss at this point and the grief cycle or anticipatory grief is intense. Ewan talks about feeling numb to the redundancy cycle that occurs each year and reapplying for his job. At the point of the interview, the prolonged and repetitive redundancy cycles are causing the participants to react in various ways. For Brogan, the loss of her youth workspace was causing an anger response evidenced in her story about the roof caving in on her temporary meeting space while with a young person. She was mourning the loss of her previous more extensive and well-stocked youth room, to the now small office space, that did not make the young people feel safe emotionally, or physically. Kate and Ewan also talked about getting stuck within their current situation and not having any options; that sense of lack of agency could be linked to the depression stage where there are limited options (Kubler-Ross 1970).

Davey, Fearon and McLaughlin (2013: 6) researched in the public sector with employees who were facing a "protracted period through which change, and eventual closure was to take place" (2013: 6). The study identified a clear recognition of a grief model showing public sector restructuring is already moving towards a more compassionate redundancy process. However, all the youth workers in this study were not yet the victims of redundancy, and yet they all demonstrated the effects of loss and were at various stages in the grief change model.

> The situation is an enforced consequence of dealing with a harsh modern economic reality, which affects individual employees who have otherwise been satisfied, loyal, engaged and considered a vital part of their organisational mainstream.
>
> (Davey, Fearon and McLaughlin 2013: 6).

It is helpful to consider a model in the business sector that captures the anticipation and stages preceding redundancy well.

With insight through Kevin's experiences as a youth work manager, with responsibility for cost-saving, we can see he felt the loss and grief experienced by his staff team. Kevin's dual identity as a youth worker and the manager kept him more connected to the purpose of youth work. He was more in touch with this aspect of workplace grief and was comfortable talking to me about his grief. Kevin was one of those who spoke about losing his sister and beloved pet when discussing grief. It is essential to consider the implications for all those involved in redundancy, including being a "perpetrator" (Vickers 2009) of the redundancy and recognising the impact of this loss on them.

In contrast, the voluntary sector youth workers (George, Sandra, Peter, Michael) were constrained by reductions to funding pots, and the Local Authority (LA) commissioned work. The voluntary sector youth workers expressed a more hopeful outlook on the situation. They did not appear stuck or awaiting their fate, but there was a greater sense of agency or control in their case. All the voluntary sector youth workers spoke about how they could change or improve their situation. Through the interviews, Peter re-wrote his job description, George left his organisation because he felt his purpose was complete, and Sandra moved on to become a full-time PhD student. The voluntary sector's nature, reliant on funding bids and looking for money to sustain their activities with young people, and organisational running costs, means those in the voluntary sector felt that they had more control. In feeling like that, they took control.

The anomaly was Brogan, who worked in a school but, unlike Caitlyn, was employed directly by the school as a senior staff member in charge of safeguarding and inclusion. Although not in her job title Brogan continued to call herself a youth worker. To consider herself a youth worker regardless of role, ensured she continued to be a youth worker and did not lose a sense of professional identity or relationship with the young people. However, Brogan's sense of loss was still a natural transition from a youth worker to a manager (Tyler, Hoggarth, and Merton 2009). Brogan spoke of her concern for the cuts in the youth sector rather than her current precarity in the school. Like those in the voluntary sector, Brogan showed a higher sense of agency about her current role and reflected on her opportunity to negotiate her role, venue to deliver her work, and students who could work with her.

Two recent articles reflecting on the youth work sector cuts link these to grief and loss. Within the closing of a youth work provision (Pugh 2019) and the broader loss of youth work (Richards and Lewis 2018), these reflective pieces support my findings and the loss responses the youth workers felt in waiting for redundancy (Vickers 2009). But in addition to this, my research found although the redundancy culture was tiring and demotivating, the youth workers remained positive with the young people and staff teams. The positive spirit of youth work supported them through this. The purpose and value of youth work helped sustain the youth workers differently to the senior executives in Vickers (2009) study. It was apparent the youth workers thought of the redundancy, loss effect, or agency as spiritual, and this was significant. The next section explores some of the youth workers' personal coping techniques and links these with previous research.

9.5.2 Personal coping

In response to the background context of cuts in the youth sector, the youth workers repeatedly prioritised a positive and protective approach to their work with young people. They set their loss-response to one side during their face-to-face practice. The findings show the significant impact of a potential redundancy on youth workers' personal lives and professional identity. Although the spirit of youth work remained positive in most cases, this was a stressful period for all.

This stressful event, being amidst redundancy and cuts, was seen for many as an emotional crisis. Balk (1999) found this emotional crisis could be a catalyst for spiritual development. Brogan's interview showed:

> Spirituality is about change, taking yourself through a process and having that recognition of change.
>
> (Brogan 2: 118-119)

My findings reflected this as in recognising the connection between spirituality and change, the youth workers remained positive and also put in some spiritual practices that were protective. The youth workers' spiritual practices discussed already in Chapter 5, helped make them more resilient to the effects of the cuts. The reflective practice, including walking, meditation, retreat, Yoga, being in nature, and an overwhelming sense of purpose, meaning and calling, all helped the youth workers feel rebalanced, protected, and able to focus on their work with young people. Acknowledging these spiritual practices occur and recognising their spiritual needs was an important finding in this study. Other research indicates reflective writing was used to cope with job loss in the context of redundancy 30 years ago (Spera, Buhrfeind, and Pennebaker 1994); this was a spiritual and creative concept that helped workers cope with emotional crisis (Balk 1999).

As Joelle and Coelho (2017) found, spirituality improved workers' attitudes and individual performance at work. The youth workers in this study were aware of their own spiritual practices that helped them cope in this situation, although, they may not have linked the two together initially. A creative approach could be useful in the context of redundancy and traumatic changes and would align with many innovative youth work approaches to practice. Several critical studies have linked workplace spirituality to effectiveness at work (Joelle and Coelho 2019). Also, workplace spirituality can be protective for staff well-being in burnout and stress (Pandey 2017) or coping with trauma (Van Hook 2016).

More generally the research is helpful on workplace spirituality as this could apply to the youth work sector. Considering spirituality alongside any changes taking place would help build a protective culture through workplace spirituality to help prevent burnout and stress. The youth workers in this thesis all demonstrated positive attitudes whilst the negative effect of stress on their work with young people seemed minimal. Using the interview to talk through the scenarios of change at that time was a protective and reflective opportunity.

9.5.3 Planning for redundancy

The literature review identified the possible effects of loss and change on the youth workers, likening it to grief. It examined the classic but dated grief model by Kubler-Ross (1970), adapted to be the Kubler-Ross Change Curve in leadership and management research (Chick 2009). Exploring change in youth work, the literature review examined the reflective, practice-based papers by youth workers or youth work academics (Pugh 2019; Richards and Lewis 2018) about the personal loss and grief felt in response to change. Similarly, youth workers in this thesis reflect on their own experiences of change and redundancy in the youth work sector.

As in the inspiring business-based research by Vickers (2009), who linked redundancy and the bereavement process, this thesis found a need for the youth workers to be considered more compassionately. Their experiences of losing the youth work profession, their work, and their professional identity were strong. In the youth workers interviews, this period of loss provided time for personal reflection. Within the interviews themselves, it was evident some spiritual growth was occurring. As seen by Balk:

> Recovery from grief involves grief work and grief avoidance; persons in grief oscillate from focussing on their loss to focusing on changes they must make in their lives: a loss orientation and restoration orientation…. I think that spiritual change during bereavement occurs only because a person spends time in both the loss orientation and the restoration orientation.
>
> Balk (1999: 490)

Balk (1999) found workers oscillated between this positive hope-filled response and the negative, sad emotions around losing a big part of themselves. However, the youth workers could move between their sense of loss to continue working with the young people and their staff within their settings. This unique ability to survive through a change process that had become repetitive in some cases (Ewan, Caitlyn) shows the youth

workers were experienced in change and supporting young people through transitions, or endings.

9.5.4 Ending well

The concept of ending, completion, or in some instances linking this to the death of youth work provision (Pugh 2019) is a spiritual concept itself. The questions, emotions, and identity issues surrounding bereavement or loss are spiritual. Reflecting on the situation, and the impact personally helped the youth workers consider their approaches to ending well. Research has found storytelling and narrative help those facing bereavement (Cuttini et al. 2003) and speaking with others directly about death can support a good end (Gerali 2009; Turner and Thomas 2006).

The youth workers often demonstrated, in the findings, how they imagined they would stop their youth work or leave the organisation - In completing their purpose there (George), the legacy they would leave behind (Michael), or the opportunities they saw for themselves in the future (Sandra, Kevin, Caitlyn). The table below summarises the youth workers responses to waiting for redundancy and captures their approach to personal coping with the situation.

1	Remove yourself and choose to leave (George)	Control of self
2	Take the opportunity to grow (Sandra, Michael, Peter)	Control of self
3	Stay and continue in a job because there seem to be no other options (Kate/Ewan)	Lack of Control
4	Cycling in the grief stages (Kubler-Ross)	Lack of Control
5	Be creative about improving job description in the current organisation (Peter)	Creative Hope
6	Look for options to avoid redundancy – team agreed reduction in hours (Michael)	Creative Hope
7	Be protective of young people and part-time staff (Caitlyn	Protection of Others
8	Spiritual practices to rebalance self (All)	Protection of Self

Table 6 - Youth workers' responses to waiting for redundancy

For some, the sense of ending was hard to comprehend and explore further. Kate stated she felt the end was inevitable, and Ewan could not consider other options, and both Kate and Ewan have shown they struggled to engage with spirituality. Conversely, those who did engage with spirituality could approach the sense of ending more directly. In support of this finding, research looking at spirituality and religion being a moderator of grief experience (Gordin 2017) found those with greater spiritual well-being experienced

less intense grief experiences. However, it is worth noting spirituality can both facilitate and complicate grief, being constructive and destructive (Doka 2002). In seeking a good ending to youth work jobs, provision or role, the role spirituality played in the youth workers' outlook within the change situation is important. The impact on the individual and the broader organisational context (Pugh 2019) is essential.

Considering the sociological and individualistic nature of spirituality and religion can help understand the existential challenges in significant losses (Thompson 2017). In facing the end, George hoped that through the overall closure of youth work provision, something new would grow. Caitlyn and Kevin also considered how the closure of centres and youth work provision would be handled with young people. Caitlyn was able to expand on this, reflecting on her quick exit from her school-based provision. She left without a celebration event, as she usually would at the end of a youth work provision. Ending well was missing during restructures and redundancies. Considering how that is managed with young people and projects is essential. Being able to face an end may be a spiritual practice in and of itself. Cunningham (2015) found in faith-based colleges and universities those experiencing involuntary job loss were able to move forward because of their spirituality and support of family and friends. The dimension of relationships with others was a crucial component. Similarly, within the youth workers' experiences, the relationship with others and spirituality played a large part in their positive outlook. In being more spiritually self-aware, the youth workers could see new roles for themselves, have hope for their, and the young people's futures.

Marking the end of a worker's job is important (Pugh 2019), and the dissatisfaction of not ending well is evident in many of the workers' experiences of the current climate. In the research about redundancy in business (Chick 2009) and the public sector (Davey, Fearon, and McLaughlin 2013) there is a lack of recognition about how to address this. They instead focus on those in management supporting workers quickly to the end of the Kubler-Ross cycle moving to acceptance, moving on, and attempting to facilitate staff "remaining positive in their current role, seeking a new job or furthering career opportunities, transferring to a new organisation, leaving for further study and personal development" (Chick 2009). Alternatively, it may be "the kick trigger" (Davey, Fearon, and McLaughlin 2013: 5) to think about doing something different with their lives.

In drawing this together the idea job loss and grief are tied together is well linked (Papa and Moitoza 2013). The new dimension in this finding with youth workers is the direct connection the youth workers made with spirituality, loss, and redundancy. There is a call for more research to be conducted around the role spirituality plays in how employees react to job insecurity (Probst and Strand 2010).

The research about redundancy and loss by Vickers (2009), built on the Kubler-Ross model (1970) with a model of *Journeys into Grief*, includes the uneasiness in a business where something changes in the work environment, directly preceding an announcement of redundancy. The "experience of redundancy is a phased journey of grief that, I believe, commences well before the confirmation of being made redundant" (Vickers 2009: 402). There is a suspicion of something changing. Vickers (2009) denotes a four-phased journey into grief: "'something changed...loss commenced...loss confirmed... and afterwards".' (Vickers 2009: 405). The Journeys into Grief model here shows grief starting before *certain* knowledge of the redundancy, and I argue, based on the findings in this thesis, prior to concrete knowledge, an inner voice or intuition informs the person affected something has changed, something is not right (Vickers 2009: 406). These four phases lead to the idea that eventually, this suspicion is confirmed, and redundancy is announced to that staff member. This acknowledgement of the precursor to redundancy is vital as the staff member may not be able to put their finger on the situation. At that point, managers may be under a confidential agreement about the redundancy process. Vickers (2009) *Journeys into Grief* model is relevant to the youth workers' experiences, as for most of them, the impact of redundancy is in anticipation rather than being made redundant.

9.5.5 Future research

This research aimed to find how spirituality impacted youth work practice. The unexpected emphasis on loss and redundancy in response to spirituality in the interviews warrants further exploration. As the research developed, a critical discourse in the participants' interviews was around the concept of redundancy, cuts, mourning for the youth work they once knew. At that point, another research project solely focused on this could have emerged. It was taking its method and methodology. IPA could have been a useful methodology still with this topic. Even if I had planned to collect data about youth workers' experiences within the climate of cuts, the project might have begun quite differently. In any case, when asked about youth work and spirituality, youth workers

spoke about redundancy, cuts, and loss are crucial and significant outcomes of this project.

In this thesis, the methodology of IPA (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) enabled the youth workers to take the interviews in the direction they wanted. However, using an alternative methodology to expand on these narratives may be useful for future research (Bold 2011; Butler-Kisber 2010; Elliott 2009; Reissman 2008). This could be conducted with other youth workers experiencing job losses to investigate the effects of cuts on them. It would be beneficial to research with youth workers who are made redundant in a similar way to Vickers' work (2009). A study to capture their experiences of the eventual redundancy using art-based approaches to generate a grounded theory as with Gottheil and Grothmarnatt (2011) who used spiritual images to generate narratives in a grounded theory study. This could develop a new theory of "redundancy-based anticipatory grief" in public sector professionals who have a sense of Ikigai about their work, to compare with that of workers previously researched in business sectors (Vickers 2009).

The ongoing cuts to the sector may affect a range of youth workers from various contexts, organisations, and sectors in diverse ways. A comparative study could explore the differences between voluntary and public sector youth workers responses to redundancy, building on the research in the public sector (Davey, Fearon, and McLaughlin 2013). Further research could develop and explore the role spirituality plays in how youth workers deal with job stressors.

9.5.6 Adding to theory

As many youth workers take on management responsibilities, it would be of value to hear these *executers'* experiences (Vickers 2009). It may be that professionals who work with young people as clients, with experience of supporting young people through *transitions work*, are more prepared for their own transitions. In this case, the youth work managers may have protective factors and expertise that could be applied to change management in other workforces.

9.5.7 Practice implications

Considering the practice element for this research finding around spirituality, loss, and redundancy, it is important to note the connection found is not necessarily causal. Being

spiritually aware and considering spiritual needs does not mean the impact of redundancy will be lessened. But the youth workers used the reflective space in the interviews to examine their own spirituality and this was shown as beneficial. The implications for practice of these findings should be taken seriously by those leading the redundancy process or those impacted. The discussion shows the impact of redundancy and cuts are beyond those directly affected, and youth workers may appear more resilient to this process as they display positivity and protection to young people and staff. This duality between being negatively affected by the redundancy and showing positivity and protection, is vital for youth workers and managers.

9.6 Reflections on the research

9.6.1 Longitudinal IPA interviews

As described in the methodology, the process of interviewing for 18 months was initially intended to capture the change situation for these workers; this was achieved and can be seen in the findings chapters around Redundancy Induced Loss. It also highlighted the benefits of regular meetings with the youth worker to discuss youth work career and spirituality. Michael likened the interviews' phenomenological approach to a positive opinion of therapy, with minimum interruptions and being guided by the direction of the participants. For him, the process of research was in and of itself a valuable use of his time. For Michael, his concern about not having enough time shows the value he placed on the encounters throughout the research study.

The youth workers often did not seem to have space or opportunity to reflect on their careers. It was not something they had identified as needed, but through the sessions, they unanimously felt it had been meaningful and beneficial to them; Prioritising the meetings, the research process, and specifically the interview style of IPA researchers, allowed youth workers to experience this. For many, following the research, they indicated they would like to identify someone they could meet with regularly to talk similarly. The research backs up spirituality can help people cope with redundancy (Joelle and Coelho 2019; Pandey 2017; Van Hook 2016). The longitudinal nature of the research links with the benefits of accompaniment over time.

9.6.2 Future research in spirituality and youth work

Considering future research in spirituality and youth work, it is worth thinking about what could be built on from this research. There is a call for conducting research within IPA

with as homogenous a sample as possible (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). As previously discussed, the youth workers chosen were not a homogenous sample, but by necessity diverse. Initially, it was considered how a more homogenous sample could be achieved. However, it is also useful to consider other methodologies that could be used to capture and more directly explore the differences and dialogues between the different views of diverse participants that arose in the research. In the initial stages of this research project, I considered interviewing multiples groups of people. Including youth workers, young people, and other stakeholders to compare spiritual experiences. However, to keep the research-focused, this was narrowed down to youth workers, drawing on previous studies with young people completed by this researcher. This could have taken the form of ethnographic research or case studies exploring various youth work settings.

With research projects (Slee, Porter, and Phillips 2016) specifically looking at the spirituality of women and girls, I considered using a feminist lens (Letherby 2003) to analyse and collect data with a focus purely on the female perspective of spirituality. There are longstanding concerns about male dominance and inequality amongst employment or work with women and girls in youth work (Sawbridge and Spence 1991). The more recent call for work with women and girls to be prioritised (Batsleer 2013) provides a good rationale, from the youth work perspective, to prioritise this spirituality and youth work research with women and girls. However in this thesis, I tried to achieve a balance between gender, but both genders appeared to respond in diverse ways to the questions. Future research that addresses distinct types of youth workers beliefs could be useful. So rather than striving for a more homogenous research sample, the study could be further differentiated with other kinds of youth workers, those with specialisms in issue-based work, the voluntary sector state duality, and those near the ends of their careers, or just entering the profession.

9.6.3 Reflection on the spirituality of research

Finally, I shall reflect upon the spirituality of the research process itself, using my reflexive journal, bracketing interviews with a skilled bracketer and the spirituality of writing up the thesis. The regular reflective techniques used through freewriting and sitting quietly to reflect after each interview can be linked to the participants' journeys of reflection and self-awareness through the data collection process. It could be argued both the researcher and participant are changed, or spiritually developed, by taking part in this

research process. The spiritual research had an impact on the youth worker, and the researcher's practice.

The use of individual reflection is mirrored in the researcher and participant journey. This is captured visually in the journey models I devised (Figures 4 and 5). This emphasis on the position of the researcher and the participant in the research journey, specifically during the data collection phase, has generated two new models to use in research:

1. The Participants' Experiential Research Journey
2. The Researcher's Experiential Data Collection Journey.

There is a duality about the use of someone to aid reflection. For the participants, it was through my interviewing them. As a researcher, it was with the skilled bracketer who helped me reflect on some of the preconceptions and judgments I may have made during the process. As Todres (2007) indicates, the concept of the research process being an embodied spiritual one resonates with me. I am a Spiritually Reflexive Researcher. In this research journey being reflexive throughout, and in the writing up period, I have felt spiritually connected to this research project. Using key terms in this research I have reflected on my own spiritual journey through the research below.

My *Identity* as a researcher is clearer to me, and how it relates with my practitioner youth work identity. As my confidence in research has grown, my skills in IPA and my research networks have become more alive.

My *Spiritual Needs* within this process have included finding my rhythm of writing. This has changed from the start when I took time in large chunks, to the final write up which has needed to be a daily activity for shorter times.

I have considered the *Space* I need to write in at each stage: in data collection at my or participants offices; in reflective journaling which was in busy cafes; in data analysis which involved spending time at a spiritual retreat house to complete the IPA. In the writing up which involved finding several spaces: a place I felt safe at work where I was not distracted; a regular all hours' drive through coffee shop to escape too; several weekends away at my parents; and establishing my home office again.

I have had the chance to be *Accompanied* through this process. By my three supervisors, my bracketing interviewer, the participants, my PhD friends and my family.

This process has been a long-term relationship and in coming to the end, and in my transition to Post PhD life, I will need to continue my reflexivity on my own spirituality. To consider my daily rhythms without PhD, my meaning, purpose and direction, my next steps, and the sense of loss I will feel in losing that relationship. In my own response to loss and change I will give myself time, and space.

(My Reflective Journal)

9.7 Does spirituality impact on youth work?

This thesis shows spirituality does have an impact on youth workers' practice. I found youth workers were spiritually self-aware of their own spiritual needs in a youth work context. They identified they needed a safe place for spiritual reflection, a regular time to do this helped, and there was a need to connect with others for spiritual support. The nature of youth work as a calling linked strongly with spirituality. The interviews showed when youth workers reflected on their work, especially during the redundancy process, they became aware that spirituality impacted the way they coped with the work and how they engaged with young people. In their activities with young people and in their careers as youth workers all the youth workers have grown in their spiritual literacy and spiritual awareness. The notion of spirituality is one they can connect with. Recognising their spirituality helped them feel more confident to support young people to develop spiritually.

> I actually think it's something all youth workers really need to think about and actually position themselves. And to be able to take in what does faith and spirituality, especially spirituality what does that actually mean to them.
>
> I think for me it's incredibly important. I think otherwise youth work just becomes, I won't say meaningless, but it becomes very functional. Do you know? And I think what we're trying to do, is get to the heart of what makes people tick. That's part of what spirituality is. (George 2: 227-260)

The youth workers interviewed did find spirituality impacted their work. They engaged with the concept of spirituality in the meaning and purpose of work. They evidenced the depth of connection in how they reacted to the threat of redundancy in the protective methods they employed for their well-being, reflective techniques, and something beyond the tangible in job calling or *meant to be*. Even when the youth workers said at the start, they did not connect much with spirituality, or they struggled with it, they still took the time to engage in the research process. The next chapter concludes the thesis, drawing together all the chapters, and providing a series of practice implications.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

This qualitative, interpretive, UK-based study explored nine secular youth workers' spiritual experiences and the impact this may have had on their practice. Each interview had a specific focus linked to the three research objectives: to identify youth workers' experiences of youth work practice; to explore youth workers' experiences of spirituality; and how (or if) spirituality impacts on their youth work practice.

The phenomenon of spirituality in youth work practice was explored through an IPA approach (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009). In the literature review and analysis, the youth workers' experiences of spirituality were found to be varied, relational and worth struggling with. This concluding chapter will summarise the key findings from each chapter of the thesis and then address the implications for future research, policy, and practice.

10.1 Literature review

The literature review found although spirituality was hard to define, it is a valuable everyday element to human experience (Pittman et al. 2008) worth exploring in more detail. To understand youth workers' spirituality experiences, it was contextualised in the spiritual history of youth work, the spirituality definitions relevant for practitioners, and empirical research with young people around spirituality. It concluded young people were already exploring spirituality, purpose, meaning, identity, and existentialism and, when given space, can talk with others about this spirituality (Dallas 2009; Rankin 2005). Youth workers should prepare themselves by considering their own spiritual heritage (Dallas 2009) in advance to support young people with their spiritual journeys (Green and Chandu 2012). As the first study to explore secular youth workers' spirituality experiences in England, this research adds to the previous spirituality studies with faith-based youth workers and community-based youth workers in the USA (Roehlekepartain 2007; Scales et al. 1995) and Ireland (Dallas 2009; McFeeters 2010). It responds to the need to bring spirituality closer to youth workers rather than keeping it at arm's length (Green 2015). It adds to the UK practice guidance around incorporating spirituality within youth work practice (Green 2006; Nemko 2006).

10.2 Methodology

The methodology chapter explained the Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 2009) chosen to explore the phenomenon of spirituality in youth work practice. It presented the rationale for choosing this over other methodologies and examined IPA's strengths and weaknesses with this phenomenon. As reflective practice and reflexivity (Bolton and Delderfield 2018) are key elements in youth work, these were embedded into the research design to enhance the IPA approach previously applied in Occupational Therapy research (Finlay 2011). The use of freewriting in reflective research journals (Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, and Poole 2004) and bracketing interviews (Rolls and Relf 2006) brought more depth to the analysis, enhanced the critical reflexivity, and brought more awareness of the impact the researcher could have on all aspects of the study. Finally, the IPA steps for analysis were illustrated with examples from the study. Looking at the research journey from both the participants' and researcher's perspective, two new visual models of using a reflexive IPA approach were given: The Researcher's Experiential Data Collection Journey and The Participants' Experiential Research Journey.

10.3 The Findings

The findings chapters provide an insight into the individual youth workers. Throughout the nine youth workers' interviews, it became clear spiritual experiences affected three primary areas: youth work; young people's activities; and the youth workers' careers. The youth workers had a diverse understanding of spirituality but there were common themes across all the participants. The IPA found four superordinate themes relevant to youth workers experiences of spirituality:

1. Spiritual Needs.
2. The Spirit of Youth Workers.
3. The Changing Youth Work Identity.
4. Redundancy Induced Loss.

In taking part in the interview process, the youth workers developed a stronger awareness of their own spirituality and became more spiritually fluent. In identifying their own spiritual needs, the youth workers described spiritual experiences around place, daily rhythm, and connections with others. The spirit of youth work found evidence of a calling into the profession that gave the youth workers purpose in their careers and awareness of the difference they make to young people's lives. As the interviews were

conducted within a changing youth work sector, with cuts and restructuring, the youth workers' identities became more into focus. The youth workers' professional identity was situated in organisational contexts, key professional values, and remained consistent regardless of the role the youth workers were taking on. Some felt the professional identity was being lost, and others saw it as immortal in the face of changing sector needs. When youth workers were asked during the interview process about spirituality, they all brought up redundancy and restructuring and linked the subsequent feelings of loss and grief with respect to their youth work to spirituality. This was an unexpected finding but a common theme across these youth workers with wider organisational implications for how youth workers should be treated in redundancy processes to be more spiritually compassionate.

10.4 Discussion

My thesis contributes to knowledge about youth work and spirituality using interpretative Phenomenological Analysis with nine youth workers. The study contributes to the small area of practitioner research using IPA to explore experiences of spiritual phenomenon. It innovatively pairs reflexivity and IPA using reflective freewriting in journals and bracketing interviews within the whole research process, adding to research. Two visualisations of the research journey from the participant and researcher are given: The Researcher's Experiential Data Collection Journey and The Participants' Experiential Research Journey. This would be a useful consideration for future researchers around this topic and develops the research literature around practitioner and reflexive IPA.

This thesis found spirituality impacted youth workers' practice. One of the most significant findings was that when asked about spirituality youth workers spoke about redundancy, restructures and their experience of loss, bereavement, and professional identity. This thesis provides additional insight into the redundancy and loss research that link with spirituality (Balk 1999; Vickers 2009). Spirituality and ending within youth work were significant issues, especially relevant for youth workers as they transitioned to new roles. The wider research around youth work has minimal emphasis on youth workers in practice, therefore this thesis provides a key contribution to the literature about the impact of redundancy on youth workers. The Journey's into Grief model (Vickers 2009) was expanded to consider those working within an organisational culture of regular redundancy cycles or waiting for redundancy. This thesis examines the concept of living with the regular threat of redundancy and restructures and presents a coping model

(Table 6) drawing from the youth workers' lived experiences, alongside showing the spiritual practices or attitudes they adopted. It builds on the work in human resources research (Vickers 2009) and provides an original perspective from the helping professions, specifically in youth work. For some, it will never come, but seeing its impact on colleagues, budgets, and therefore, provision for young people has been likened to grief and loss and links with spirituality. This thesis will be of interest for those who have been through redundancy as a survivor, victim, or executor (Vickers 2009) and to those researching the lived experiences of spirituality or youth work. This is significant as youth workers specialise in supporting young people through transitions in life. Youth workers' expertise in transitions work can apply to their own experience of transition in redundancy and restructuring and personal coping (Table 6) here may be relevant to other sectors.

10.5 Implications for practice and policy

This thesis is relevant to youth work, practitioners looking to develop young people's spirituality and those with a general interest in researching spirituality. It identifies the following implications for youth work practice:

1. The need to consider spiritual development opportunities when working with young people, using broad spirituality definitions to encompass purposeful practice.
2. Youth workers would benefit from regular conversations on spirituality covering aspects of self-awareness, connections with others and reflexivity.
3. The benefit of a spiritual mentor who could meet with youth workers and look at career, purpose and spirituality with a listening and phenomenological attitude.
4. The need to identify opportunities to use space, nature, and environment with young people to develop spirituality in their daily routines.
5. That if youth workers and managers could speak about their experiences of the redundancy and restructuring processes in a safe space, it could help recognise that the emotional crisis of workplace change can be a catalyst for spiritual development.
6. The need to consider appropriate ways to end well within restructure and redundancy with staff and with young people. This is likely to be bespoke in each situation.

In returning to the research question: Does spirituality impact youth work practice? For all youth workers interviewed, the answer was yes. The empirical findings link back to the historical, spiritual roots of youth work. The similarities between the Albemarle period of youth work and now are clearer through the lens of this research, especially around the theme of Redundancy Induced Loss. The poignant phrase that the youth sector was *dying on its feet* (HMSO 1960) struck a chord in the current climate. It is hoped now this research is completed, enough time will have passed, or pertinent events in the lives of young people happened, for the government to remember the importance of youth work. This research calls for a "revivification" (HMSO 1960: 1) that reignites national youth work training in Universities, that reintroduces youth work posts nationwide, and returns the attention to spirituality in the National Occupational Standards for Youth Work. I have learnt youth work has many connections with spirituality: historically, in its purpose and values, and types of youth work activities; The youth workers' careers are also entwined with spiritual notions, places, and purpose; The youth workers interviewed all recognised their experiences of spirituality being a significant factor in their practice.

Spirituality is a significant component *of* youth work and *for* youth workers. It should continue to be a concern of all youth workers. It is important to young people and youth workers need to be resilient within a stressful and crisis-ridden field of work. Everyone needs to feel free to engage in spiritual practices that help them to get through, without requiring anyone to take on their view. Youth workers, and helping professionals, should be comfortable talking about spiritual needs, issues, and questions they may have without feeling they have to deny or hide it. Spirituality is an element of youth workers' personal and professional identity they need to look at, struggle with, and examine, to prepare themselves to talk openly about this with young people.

The final words can come from the almost poetic rhythm of Brogan's thought stream as she reminds us of our spiritual selves:

> So, for me,
>
> It's about challenging,
>
> It's about I've found myself,
>
> It's about self-awareness,
>
> It's about seeking answers,
>
> It's about reflection, and we do a lot of reflection in our jobs as youth workers as well,

It’s about having an understanding,

It’s about being in touch with your emotional side as well, and being able to empathise with others,

It’s about we’re here for a purpose.

We’ve got a reason in life.

(Brogan 2: 50-58)

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Appendices

A - Ethical Approval Certificate

B - Interview Schedule

Overall Question: Does a youth worker's experience of spirituality have an impact on their youth work practice?

Interview Schedule

There will be three semi-structured interviews taking three aspects of the overall question, each lasting for approximately one hour.

Firstly, the participants' experience of youth work practice at the moment; secondly to discuss what spirituality means to the participant, and finally **how spirituality and youth work career and practice** may be linked. Each interview will be spaced by a 10-14 weeks gap to allow participants to read transcripts and reflect further.

Each interview will be based around these topics and the questions detailed below will be used as a guide. It is intended that the interviews will be fluid and follow the direction the participant takes it; the questions are to be used as a guide but are not essential. As such, the individual questions are not numbered as they may be taken in a different order depending on the flow of the conversation

Each schedule begins with the aim of the interview, guidance notes and ends with a script thanking the participant and indicating the next steps of the process.

Aim of Interview 1 - To discuss your experience of youth work practice at the moment.

Guidance notes:

This might include discussions about identity, description of current situation / organisation, role as a youth worker, type of young people worked with, feelings about job / function, main role or voluntary, job security, future aspirations (next year, five years).

This will be informed by Gibbs' (1988) reflective practice model to indicate the areas to discuss and reflect on with a clear emphasis not only on the present, but also future plans covering the key areas of description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusions and action plans.

Questions to guide discussion:

Description

- How did you come to be a youth worker?
- Could you talk to me about the Youth Work you are currently involved in?
    - Thinking back over the last 12 months what have you done in your job?
    - Could you describe the roles you undertake as a youth worker?
- What interaction do you have with young people?
- How would you describe or define 'Youth Work' at this current time?

Feelings

- How have you felt in your job over the last 12 months?
- When you go home after work are you able to leave your work 'in the office'?
    - How does that make you feel or impact on your life?
- How secure do you feel in your job at the moment?
    - Does security matter to you?
- Do you feel valued in your role at the moment?

Evaluation

- What would you say are some of the positives about your youth work at the moment?
- What would you say are some of the negatives about your youth work at the moment?
- Is there anything that you are quite apathetic about at the moment?
    - If so, could you explain it
    - And why?

Analysis

- How are you making sense of your current youth work situation?
- How are you making sense of the national picture?

Conclusions

- Is there anything you could do to change or improve your current situation?
- What would be your first change if you could make one?
- Is there anything you would like to conclude at this point?

Actions

- Is there anything that you are thinking about doing differently over the next year or so?

Ending paragraph *(to be read to participants)*

Thinking about the aim of this interview as we conclude, **your experience of youth work practice at the moment**, is there anything else you would like to say or question?

Thank you very much for your time. I will be in touch again in a few weeks to email you your transcript of this interview; it will be encrypted, and you will need to enter a password to open it - your password will be *[insert password]*. Please read through the transcript before the next interview, as we will be starting with a reflection on anything that particularly struck you or that you returned to think about after the interview.

Again, thank you very much for your time.

Aim of Interview 2 – To discuss what spirituality means to you.

Guidance notes:

The questions will be framed using two differing worldview perspectives. The first perspective will come from a 'life terminology': looking at the things that motivate you or hold you back; the big questions you have in life; the things that sustain you or relieve stress; what helps you focus; what brings meaning or purpose to your life; and how you view your life or in other words how you view the world.

The second perspective will come from 'spiritual language': exploring your definition of spirituality; it's relation to religion; whether you have had any spiritual experiences; if you do anything that might be considered a spiritual practice; how you might describe a spiritual person; and reflection on your own spirituality.

Reflection on last interview/transcript

- Reflect back question: looking back to the last interview you had with me and reading through your transcript is there anything that particularly struck you, or that you returned to think about after the interview?
- Could you see any patterns or themes in what you spoke about?

Questions to guide discussion:

Life terminology

- Could you describe what you do to relieve stress?
- Are there any 'big questions' that you consider, or remain unanswered for you?
    - If so what are they?
        - And why do they seem important to you?
- What gives you meaning in life?
- As you make life choices or decisions what are some of the things that motivate you or hold you back?
- How do you view the world?
    - Are there any principles or values that you try to live your life by?
- If you reflect on the way other people live their life is there anything you would do differently in your own life?
- Has anyone acted as a role model for you in your life?
    - If so could you tell me a bit about them?

Spiritual language

- How would you define spirituality?
- How would you describe a spiritual person?
- Would you class yourself as being spiritual?
- Can you think of anything you'd class as a spiritual experience that you yourself have experienced?
- Do you do anything that might be considered a spiritual practice?
- Is spirituality important to you?
- Do you think spirituality should be important to others?
- Has spirituality had an impact on the work you do?

Ending paragraph (to be read to participants)

Thinking about the aim of this interview as we conclude, discussing what spirituality means to you, is there anything else you would like to say or question?

Thank you very much for your time. I will be in touch again in a few weeks to email you your transcript of this interview; it will be encrypted, and you will need to enter a password to open it - your password will be *[insert password]*. Please read through the transcript before the next interview, as we will be starting with a reflection on anything that particularly struck you or that you returned to think about after the interview.

Again, thank you very much for your time.

Interview 3 – How is spirituality and your youth work career/practice linked?

Guidance notes:

The questions here will explore the link to spirituality between youth worker career and youth work practice. It is intended that this interview will reflect on, and draw together, the conversations held within the previous interviews.

Reflection on last interview/transcript

- Reflect back question: looking back to the last interview you had with me and reading through your transcript is there anything that particularly struck you, or that you returned to think about after the interview?
- Could you see any patterns or themes in what you spoke about?

Questions to guide discussion:

- Do you think the first interview about your youth work identity and the second interview about you and spirituality could be connected at all?
    - If so, how?

Youth Work Career

- In this current climate, how do you avoid 'burn out'?
- Is there a place, or thing you do, to retreat, or recharge?
    - Where is that place?
    - What do you do there?
- How does your job purpose align with your own purpose in life?
- What are you most passionate about in your youth work?

Youth Work Practice

- In your role as a youth worker do you think you have any responsibility to develop young people spirituality.
    - Can you expand on that?
    - How might you go about developing young people spiritually?
- Is there anything that might hold you back from working with young people around spirituality?
    - Anything else?
- In what situations do you think you would prioritise a spiritual focus with young people?
    - Have you seen other people prioritising a spiritual focus or activity in their youth work?
- Can you think of any examples of when your youth work practice could be described as spiritual?
    - Is this a regular feature of your work?

Ending paragraph (to be read to participants)

Thinking about the aim of this interview as we conclude, **how spirituality and youth work practice may be linked,** is there anything else you would like to say or question?

Thank you very much for your time. I will be in touch again in a few weeks to email you your transcript of this interview; it will be encrypted, and you will need to enter a password to open it - your password will be *[insert password]*. Please read through the transcript, if you would like to contact me again to give me any additional thoughts and answers you may contact me via email at to arrange verbal or written feedback.

As we have come to an end of the set of interviews may I thank you for your time and energy. If you are interested in the findings and results from this research please let me know and I'd be happy to send them to you.

C - Participant Information Sheet

Participants Information Sheet

Study Title

To explore Youth Workers' experiences of spirituality and its affect on youth work practice.

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a series of three interviews each lasting up to an hour. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the interviews are being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the interview and what will happen to me if I take part?

The main aim is to explore Youth Workers experiences of spirituality and its affect on their youth work practice.

You will take part in 3 interviews across a 9 – 12 month period. We will book in the first interview to take place either at your workplace in an interview room or at Coventry University. Each interview will take place for an hour or so and there is a recorder on the table so that this interview can be transcribed afterwards. When transcribed the interview will be sent to you in preparation for the second interview for you to reflect on any themes that emerge. The next interview will then be booked in for another 3 months time. Following the second interview the transcription will again be sent to you and the next interview will be booked in. After the final interview you will be again invited to feedback on the final transcript and this will take place via email.

You are 1 of up to 15 participants that are taking place, all will be analysed for the benefit of Jess Bishop's PhD research about Youth Work and Spirituality.

Why have I been chosen?

We are interviewing practicing youth workers from across the Midlands including those who are JNC qualified, JNC qualifying and not JNC qualified. You are also able to take part if you were practicing as a youth worker within the last 2 years, but are not currently. There will be a few guided questions but we want this to be mostly guided by you.

The questions that would be asked in the Interviews

Interview 1 – To talk about your experience of youth work practice at the moment.
Interview 2 – To discuss spirituality what it means for you and how spirituality may relate to you as a youth worker.
Interview 3 – To talk about how spirituality and youth work practice may be linked.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
There are no any disadvantages or costs involved in taking part in the interview other than giving up your time to attend the interviews.

What are the benefits of taking part?
Participation in the study has some benefits, e.g. Satisfaction and pride- knowing you are helping others, sharing experiences, exploring youth work practice and spirituality, a confidential place to discuss youth work practice at this time.

Will what I say in this interview be kept confidential?
All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). You will not be identified by name in the collection, storage and write up of PhD or subsequent dissemination of findings - instead a code will be used.

What should I do if I want to take part?
Tell the interviewer if you want to take part in the study.

What will happen to the result of the interview?
All transcripts of interview will be analysed for the benefit of Jess Bishop's PhD research.

Who has reviewed this interview?
You and the researcher will review the interview transcript as part of the interview process. The result of this interview will be used for Jess Bishop's PhD, and subsequent publications, and will be assessed by supervisory team and external examiners. If you would like a copy of the PhD please let the interviewer know.

Contact for Further Information

Thank you
Thank you for your interest and for taking time to read the information sheet.

Date
September 2013

D - Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form Template

Summary information about research

You are being invited to take part in a series of three interviews to explore Youth Workers experiences of spirituality and the effect it has on youth work practice. Please read the Participant Information Sheet provided before signing this consent form.

Please tick

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

3. I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in confidence; and the interviews will be recorded, anonymised, transcribed and written up for PhD/dissemination.

4. I understand that I also have the right to change my mind about participating in the study for a short period after the study has concluded (insert deadline here).

5. I agree to be filmed/recorded (delete as appropriate) as part of the research project

6. I agree to take part in the research project

Name of participant: .....

Signature of participant: .....

Date: .....

Witnessed by (if appropriate): .....

Name of witness: .....

Signature of witness:.....

Name of Researcher:.....

Signature of researcher: .....

Date:.....

E – Table of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Table showing the prevalence of the participants in each of the themes. Note this is not the way the themes were generated but may be useful to show which participants were found in the superordinate and subordinate themes.

Superordinate theme	Subordinate themes	Number of participants present	Participant and evidence of the theme in interview transcripts (Interview Number: Pages)
Spiritual Needs Chapter 5	Spiritually self-aware	9 out of 9	**Brogan** (2: 38-45; 2: 80-89) **Caitlyn** (2: 191-195; 3: 107-111) **Ewan** (2: 33-35; 2: 43-45; 2: 215; 3: 275-291) **George** (2: 29-40) **Kate** (2: 13-22; 2: 50-55) **Kevin** (2: 118-125) **Michael** (2: 54-63; 2: 76) **Peter** (2: 11-15; 2: 16-21) **Sandra** (2: 31-37)
	Spiritual Places	6 out of 9	**Brogan** (2: 190-202; 2: 315-318; 3: 120-121; 3: 50-66; 3: 92-94) **Caitlyn** (2: 401-405; 2: 406-419) **George** (2: 47-50; 2: 155-159; 2: 60-61; 2: 60-85) **Kate** (3: 133-143; 2: 152-166) **Kevin** (1: 132-144; 1: 400-410; 2: 273-276; 2: 55-65; 3: 17-20; 3: 62-68) **Michael** (2: 104-110)
	Purposeful Spiritual Practices	5 out of 9	**Caitlyn** (2: 113-136; 2: 48-83; 2: 170-182) **George** (2: 98-120) **Kate** (3: 154-156) **Peter** (2: 106-152; 2: 195-200) **Sandra** (3: 70-71)
	Connecting with others	5 out of 9	**Brogan** (1: 204-212; 2: 270-279) **Ewan** (2: 104-108) **Kevin** (1: 111-119) **Michael** (2: 555-557; 3: 400-410; 2: 127-130; 2: 297-319)

			Sandra (1:865-873)
The Spirit of Youth Workers Chapter 6	Positive Purpose of Youth Work	5 out of 9	**Brogan** (2: 50-58; 2: 72-76; 2: 327-340; 2: 341-351; 2: 376-380; 2: 90-103) **Ewan** (Not quoted in this section) **Kevin** (1: 294-299; 1: 266-273; 1: 439-445; 1: 421-425) **Peter** (3: 62-70; 3: 76-81) **Sandra** (3: 555-559)
	Peace in a job	7 out of 9	**Brogan** (not quoted in this section) **Caitlyn** (1: 527-543; 2:549-575; 2: 549-582; 1:613-617) **Ewan**, (2:76-8; 1:141-153; 3: 266-272) **George** (2: 198-207) **Kevin** (1: 316-328) **Peter** (1: 528-540) **Sandra** (2: 75-88; 2:100-109; 1:344-348)
	The Difference made	8 out of 9	**Brogan** (2: 90-103) Caitlyn (1: 613-617) **Ewan** (2: 76-81; 1: 141-153: 3: 266-272) **George** (not quoted in this section) **Kevin** (1:472-478; 1:198-214 1:198-214; 2:67) **Michael** (not quoted in this section) **Peter** (1:628-634) **Sandra** (1: 344-348)
A Changing Youth Work Identity Chapter 7	Becoming a Youth Worker	9 out of 9	**Brogan** (2: 118-119; 2: 150-162)) **Caitlyn** (3: 316-324; 1: 378-390) **Ewan** (Not quoted in this section) **George** (Not quoted in this section) **Kate** (Not quoted in this section) **Kevin** (1: 40-47) **Michael** (1: 40-46) **Peter** (1: 362:366) **Sandra** (2: 365-370; 2:379-393)

	Youth Work Professional Identity	8 out of 9	**Brogan** (1: 241; 1: 198-207; 1:30-36; 1: 715-718) **Caitlyn** (Not quoted in this section) **Ewan** (3: 185-189) **George** (Not quoted in this section) **Kate** (Not quoted in this section) **Kevin** (Not quoted in this section) **Michael** (Not quoted in this section) **Peter** (Not quoted in this section)
	Moving on and passing forward	5 out of 9	**Ewan** (1: 45-50) **Caitlyn** (1: 60-72) **Kate** (1: 430-436) **Kevin** (1: 70-79) **Michael** (3: 206-209; 3: 78-82)
Redundancy Induced Loss Chapter 8	The current YW climate is awful	8 out of 9	**Brogan** (Not quoted in this section) **Caitlyn** (1: 81-83; 1: 83-86; 1: 97-108; 2: 424-433; 1: 152-155) **Ewan** (1: 29-31; 3: 185-189; 1: 164-172) **George** (1: 449-465) **Kate** (1: 359-362; 1: 334) **Kevin** (2: 299-302) **Michael** (1: 252-254; 1: 410-419; 2: 411-418; 1: 286-292) **Sandra** (1: 587-598; 1: 1010-1019)
	Personal Coping with redundancy	7 out of 9	**Brogan** (1: 629-639) **Caitlyn** (3: 340-451; 3: 340-359) **Ewan** (1: 346-361; 1: 362-374) **George** (Not quoted in this section) **Kate** (2: 349-351) **Kevin** (Not quoted in this section) **Michael** (Not quoted in this section)
	Planning for redundancy	7 out of 9	**Brogan** (1: 198-200) **Caitlyn** (1: 560-561; 3: 513-516; 1: 403-410; 3: 403-411)

			Ewan (Not quoted in this section) **George** (1: 368-388; 1: 756-775) **Kate** (1: 108; 1: 389) **Kevin** (1: 378-388; 1: 253-259; 2: 379-388) **Michael** (Not quoted in this section)
All participants. Brogan, Caitlyn, Ewan, Kate, Kevin, George, Michael, Sandra, Peter			

F – Publications

Bishop, J. (2015) 'Youth Work about death and dying'. In *Youth work and Faith: Debates, delights and dilemmas.* Ed. By Smith, M., Stanton, N. And Wylie, T. Lyme Regis: Russell House Publishing

Abstract

Death is a subject that as youth workers we may avoid talking about with young people. However the Association for Children with Life-threatening or Terminal Conditions (ACT 2011) has found that "over 23,500 children and young people in the UK ... have been diagnosed with a health condition for which there is no hope of cure" and Harrison and Harrington (2001) found that 92% of young people had experienced a 'significant' bereavement before the age of 16. This chapter asks if the generic youth worker allows sufficient space to talk with young people about death. Jeffs and Smith (2005) advocate for conversation as being crucial to youth work. Rankin (2005) indicates that allowing space for young people to talk about spirituality is key to their positive development. This chapter will explore three different situations where young people may need support around the subject of death: where a young person is dying; when a young person experiences bereavement or loss; and how a young person explores questions about death in a youth work context. It will draw from theory and explores implications for youth work practice

G – Academic Posters

Bishop, J. (2016) 'Youth Workers' Experiences of spirituality: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis'. *Postgraduate Research Symposium.* Held April 2016 Coventry, UK, Poster presentation

Bishop, J. (2014) 'Does spirituality impact on Youth Work practice: Phase One Youth Workers' experiences of Youth Work practice'. *Postgraduate Research Symposium.* Held March 2014, Coventry, UK, Poster presentation

Bishop, J. (2013) 'Researching Spirituality with Youth Workers: My journey so far...' *Postgraduate Research Symposium.* Held March 2013, Coventry, UK, Poster presentation

H – Conference Presentation Titles

Bishop, J. (2020) 'Spiritually reflexive research: an insider's methodological considerations within an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of nine youth workers' spirituality. British Association for the Study of Spirituality (BASS) 2020: Spirituality in Research, Professional Practice and Education. Held June 2020, York, UK, Oral Presentation

Bishop, J. (2018) 'Youth Workers' Experiences of Spirituality and the Impact it has on Practice: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' 6th European Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Health and 5th International Conference of the British Association for the Study of Spirituality. Held April 2018, Coventry, UK, Oral Presentation

Bishop, J. (2016) 'Qualitative Research – A PhD example'. *Social Research Methods.* Held March 2016, Coventry, UK, Oral Presentation

Bishop, J. (2014) 'Children and Young People's Spirituality' *Coventry Diocese Spiritual Directors training.* Held January 2014, Shipston-on Stour and Leamington Spa, UK, Oral Presentation

Bishop, J. (2013) 'Youth Work and Spirituality vs Surviving my PhD' *Postgraduate Research Student Forum.* Held December 2013, Coventry University, Coventry, UK, Oral Presentation

Bishop, J. (2013) 'Is there a place for Spirituality within the helping professions' *Practicing Social and Youth Work in an Uncertain World*. Held May 2013, Coventry, UK, Workshop.

Bishop, J. (2013) ‘Youth Work and Spirituality – Research Methodology’ *Youth Focus West Midlands Research Forum*. Held October 2013, Birmingham, UK, Oral Presentation